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H. DE BALZAC

EUGÉNIE GRANDET

THE COUNTRY PARSON

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED BY

ELLEN MARRIAGE

WITH PREFACES BY

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EUGÉNIE GRANDET
THE MARANAS
THE EXECUTIONER
FAREWELL
A SEASIDE TRAGEDY



"COME, NANON, TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE"

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PREFACE.

With "Eugénie Grandet," as with one or two, but only one or two others of Balzac's works, we come to a case of *Quis vituperavit?* Here, and perhaps here only, with "Le Médecin de Campagne" and "Le Père Goriot," though there may be carpers and depreciators, there are no open deniers of the merit of the work. The pathos of Eugénie, the mastery of Grandet, the success of the minor characters, especially Nanon, are universally recognized. The importance of the work has sometimes been slightly questioned even by those who admit its beauty: but this questioning can only support itself on the unavowed but frequently present conviction or suspicion that a "good" or "goody" book must be a weak one. As a matter of fact, no book can be, or can be asked to be, better than perfect on its own scheme, and with its own conditions. And on its own scheme and with its own conditions "Eugénie Grandet" is very nearly perfect.

On the character of the heroine will turn the final decision whether, as has been said by some (I believe I might be charged with having said it myself), Balzac's virtuous characters are always more theatrical than real. The decision must take in the Benassis of "Le Médecin de Campagne," but with him it will have less difficulty; for Benassis, despite the beauty and pathos of his confession, is a little "a person of the boards" in his unfailingly providential character and his complete devotion to others. Must Eugénie, his feminine companion in goodness, be put on these boards likewise?

I admit that of late years, and more particularly since the undertaking of this present task made necessary to me a more complete and methodical study of the whole works, including

the most miscellaneous miscellanies, than I had previously given, my estimate of Balzac's goodness has gone up very much—that of his greatness had no need of raising. But I still think that even about Eugénie there is a very little unreality, a slight touch of that ignorance of the actual nature of girls which even fervent admirers of French novelists in general, and of Balzac in particular, have confessed to finding in them and him. That Eugénie should be entirely subjugated first by the splendor, and then by the misfortune, of her Parisian cousin, is not in the least unnatural; nor do I for one moment pretend to deny the possibility or the likelihood of her having

"lifted up her eyes,
And loved him with that love which was her doom."

It is also difficult to make too much allowance for the fatal effect of an education under an insignificant if amiable mother and a tyrannical father, and of a confinement to an excessively small circle of extremely provincial society, on a disposition of more nobility than intellectual height or range. Still it must, I think, be permitted to the *advocatus diaboli* to urge that Eugénie's martyrdom is almost too thorough; that though complete, it is not, as Gautier said of his own ill luck, "*artistement* complet;" that though it may be difficult to put the finger on any special blot, to say, "Here the girl should have revolted," or, "Here she would have behaved in some other way differently;" still there is a vague sense of incomplete lifelikeness—of that tendency to mirage and exaggeration which has been, and will be, so often noticed.

Still it is vague and not unpleasantly obtrusive, and in all other ways Eugénie is a triumph. It is noticeable that her creator has dwelt on the actual traits of her face with much more distinctness than is usual with him; for Balzac's extraordinary minuteness in many ways does not invariably extend to physical charms. This minuteness is indeed so great that one has a certain suspicion of the head being taken from a live

and special original. Nor is her physical presence—abominably libeled, there is no doubt, by Mme. des Grassins—the only distinct thing about Eugénie. We see her hovering about the *beau cousin* with an innocent officiousness capable of committing no less the major crime of lending him money than the minor, but even more audacious because open, one of letting him have sugar. She is perfectly natural in the courage with which she bears her father's unjust rage, and in the forgiveness which, quite as a matter of course, she extends to him after he has broken her own peace and her mother's heart. It is perhaps necessary to be French to comprehend entirely why she could not heap that magnificent pile of coals of fire on her unworthy cousin's head without flinging herself and her seventeen millions into the arms of somebody else; but the thing can be accepted if not quite understood. And the whole transaction of this heaping is admirable.

Nanon is, of course, quite excellent. She is not stupid, as her kind are supposed to be; she is only blindly faithful, as well as thoroughly good-hearted. Nor is the unfortunate Madame Grandet an idiot, nor are any of the *comparses* mere dummies. But naturally they all, even Eugénie herself to some extent, serve mainly as set-offs to the terrible Grandet. In him Balzac, a Frenchman of Frenchmen, has boldly depicted perhaps the worst and the commonest vice of the French character, the vice which is more common, and certainly worse than either the frivolity or the license with which the nation is usually charged—the pushing, to wit, of thrift to the loathsome excess of an inhuman avarice. But he has justified himself to his country by communicating to his hero an unquestioned grandeur. The mirage works again, but it works with splendid effect. One need not be a sentimentalist to shudder a little at the *ta ta ta ta* of Grandet, the refrain of a money-grubbing which almost escapes greediness by its diabolical extravagance and success.

The bibliography of "Eugénie Grandet" is not compli-

cated. Balzac tried the first chapter (there were originally seven) in *L'Europe Littéraire* for September 19, 1833; but he did not continue it there, and it appeared complete in the first volume of "Scènes de la Vie de Province" next year. Charpentier republished it in a single volume in 1839. The "Comédie" engulfed it in 1843, the chapter divisions then disappearing.

All the "Marana" group of stories appeared together in the fourth edition of the "Philosophical Studies," 1835–1837. Most of them, however, had earlier appearances in periodicals and in the *Romans et Contes Philosophiques*, which preceded the "Studies." And in these various appearances they were subjected to their author's usual processes of division and unification, of sub-titling and canceling sub-titles. "Les Marana" appeared first in the *Revue de Paris* for the last month of 1832 and the first of 1833; while it next made a show, oddly enough, as a "Scène de la vie Parisienne." "Farewell" (Adieu) appeared in the *Mode* during June, 1830, and was afterwards for a time a "Scène de la vie privée." "The Executioner" (*El Verdugo*) was issued by the *Mode* for January 29, 1830; and "A Seaside Tragedy" (*Un Drame au bord de la mer*) appeared nowhere except in book form with its companions until 1843, when it left them for a time (afterwards to return), and under another title accompanied several other stories in a separate publication. G. S.

EUGÉNIE GRANDET.

To Maria.

Your portrait is the fairest ornament of this book, and here it is fitting that your name should be set, like the branch of box taken from some unknown garden to lie for a while in the holy water, and afterwards set by pious hands above the threshold, where the green spray, ever renewed, is a sacred talisman to ward off all evil from the house.

In some country towns there are houses more depressing to the sight than the dimmest cloister, the most melancholy ruins, or the dreariest stretch of sandy waste. Perhaps such houses combine the characteristics of all the three, and to the dumb silence of the monastery they unite the gauntness and grimness of the ruin, and the arid desolation of the waste. So little sign is there of life or of movement about them, that a stranger might take them for uninhabited dwellings; but the sound of an unfamiliar footstep brings some one to the window, a passive face suddenly appears above the sill, and the traveler receives a listless and indifferent glance—it is almost as if a monk leaned out to look for a moment on the world.

There is one particular house front in Saumur which possesses all these melancholy characteristics; the house is still standing at the end of the steep street which leads to the castle, at the upper end of the town. The street is very quiet nowadays; it is hot in summer and cold in winter, and very dark in places; besides this, it is remarkably narrow and crooked, there is a peculiarly formal and sedate air about its houses, and it is curious how every sound reverberates through

it—the cobblestones (always clean and dry) ring with every passing footfall.

This is the oldest part of the town, the ramparts rise immediately above it. The houses of the quarter have stood for three centuries; and albeit they are built of wood, they are strong and sound yet. Each house has a certain character of its own, so that for the artist and antiquary this is the most attractive part of the town of Saumur. Indeed, it would hardly be possible to go past the house, without a wondering glance at the grotesque figures carved on the projecting ends of the huge beams, set like a black bas-relief above the ground floor of almost every dwelling. Sometimes, where these beams have been protected from the weather by slates, a strip of dull blue runs across the crumbling walls, and crowning the whole is a high-pitched roof oddly curved and bent with age; the shingle boards that cover it are all warped and twisted by the alternate sun and rain of many a year. There are bits of delicate carving too, here and there, though you can scarcely make them out, on the worn and blackened window sills that seemed scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of the red flower-pot in which some poor workwoman has set her tree carnation or her monthly rose.

Still further along the street there are more pretentious house-doors studded with huge nails. On these our forefathers exercised their ingenuity, tracing hieroglyphs and mysterious signs which were once understood in every household, but all clues to their meaning are forgotten now—they will be understood no more of any mortal. In such wise would a Protestant make his profession of faith, there also would a Leaguer curse Henry IV. in graven symbols. A burgher would commemorate his civic dignities, the glory of his long-forgotten tenure of office as alderman or sheriff. On these old houses, if we could but read it, the history of France is chronicled.

Beside the rickety little tenement built of wood, with masonry of the roughest, upon the wall of which the craftsman

has set the glorified image of his trade—his plane—stands the mansion of some noble, with its massive round arched gateway; you can still see some traces above it of the arms borne by the owner, though they have been torn down in one of the many revolutions which have convulsed the country since 1789.

You will find no imposing shop windows in the street; strictly speaking, indeed, there are no shops at all, for the rooms on the ground floor in which articles are exposed for sale are neither more nor less than the workshops of the times of our forefathers; lovers of the middle ages will find here the primitive simplicity of an older world. The low-ceiled rooms are dark, cavernous, and guiltless alike of plate-glass windows or of showcases; there is no attempt at decoration either within or without, no effort is made to display the wares. The door, as a rule, is heavily barred with iron and divided into two parts; the upper half is thrown back during the day, admitting fresh air and daylight into the damp little cave; while the lower portion, to which a bell is attached, is seldom still. The shop front consists of a low wall of about elbow height, which fills half the space between floor and ceiling; there is no window sash, but heavy shutters fastened with iron bolts fit into a groove in the top of the wall, and are set up at night and taken down in the morning. The same wall serves as a counter on which to set out goods for the customer's inspection. There is no sort of charlatanism about the proceeding. The samples submitted to the public vary according to the nature of the trade. You behold a keg or two of salt or of salted fish, two or three bales of sail-cloth or coils of rope, some copper wire hanging from the rafters, a few cooper's hoops on the walls, or a length or two of cloth upon the shelves.

You go in. A neat and tidy damsel with a pair of bare red arms, the fresh good looks of youth, and a white handkerchief pinned about her throat, lays down her knitting and goes to summon a father or mother, who appears and sells goods to

you as you desire, be it a matter of two sous or of twenty thousand francs; the manner of the transaction varying as the humor of the vendor is surly, obliging, or independent. You will see a dealer in barrel-staves sitting in his doorway, twirling his thumbs as he chats with a neighbor; judging from appearances, he might possess nothing in this world but the bottles on his few rickety shelves and two or three bundles of laths; but his well-stocked timber-yard on the quay supplies all the coopers in Anjou, he knows to a barrel-stave how many casks he can "turn out," as he says, if the vines do well and the vintage is good; a few scorching days and his fortune is made, a rainy summer is a ruinous thing for him; in a single morning the price of puncheons will rise as high as eleven francs or drop to six.

Here, as in Touraine, the whole trade of the district depends upon an atmospherical depression. Landowners, vine-growers, timber merchants, coopers, innkeepers and lightermen, one and all are on the watch for a ray of sunlight. Not a man of them but goes to bed in fear and trembling lest he should hear in the morning that there has been a frost in the night. If it is not rain that they dread, it is wind or drought; they must have cloudy weather or heat, and the rainfall and the weather generally all arranged to suit their peculiar notions.

Between the clerk of the weather and the vine-growing interest there is a duel which never ceases. Faces visibly lengthen or shorten, grow bright or gloomy, with the ups and downs of the barometer. Sometimes you hear from one end to the other of the old High Street of Saumur the words, "This is golden weather!" or again, in language which likewise is no mere figure of speech, "It is raining gold louis!" and they all know the exact value of sun or rain at the right moment.

After twelve o'clock or so on a Saturday in the summer-time, you will not do a pennyworth of business among the

worthy townsmen of Saumur. Each has his little farm and his bit of vineyard, and goes to spend the "week end" in the country. As everybody knows this beforehand, just as everybody knows everybody else's business, his goings and comings, his buyings and sellings, and profits to boot, the good folk are free to spend ten hours out of the twelve in making up pleasant little parties, in taking notes and making comments, and keeping a sharp lookout on their neighbors' affairs. The mistress of a house cannot buy a partridge but the neighbors will inquire of her husband whether the bird was done to a turn; no damsel can put her head out of the window without being observed by every group of unoccupied observers.

Impenetrable, dark, and silent as the houses may seem, they contain no mysteries hidden from public scrutiny, and in the same way every one knows what is passing in every one else's mind. To begin with, the good folk spend most of their lives out of doors; they sit on the steps of their houses, breakfast there and dine there, and adjust any little family differences in the doorway. Every passer-by is scanned with the most minute and diligent attention; hence, any stranger who may happen to arrive in such a country town has, in a manner, to run the gantlet, and is severely quizzed from every doorstep. By dint of perseverance in the methods thus indicated a quantity of droll stories may be collected; and, indeed, the people of Angers, who are of an ingenious turn, and quick at repartee, have been nicknamed "the tattlers" on these very grounds.

The largest houses of the old quarter in which the nobles once dwelt are all at the upper end of the street, and in one of these the events took place which are about to be narrated in the course of this story. As has been already said, it was a melancholy house, a venerable relic of a bygone age, built for the men and women of an older and simpler world, from which our modern France is farther and farther removed day by day. After you have followed for some distance the

windings of the picturesque street, where memories of the past are called up by every detail at every turn, till at length you fall unconsciously to musing, you come upon a sufficiently gloomy recess in which a doorway is dimly visible, the door of *M. Grandet's house.* Of all the pride and glory of proprietorship conveyed to the provincial mind by those three words, it is impossible to give any idea, except by giving the biography of the owner—M. Grandet.

M. Grandet enjoyed a certain reputation in Saumur. Its causes and effects can scarcely be properly estimated by outsiders who have not lived in a country town for a longer or shorter time. There were still old people in existence who could remember former times, and called M. Grandet "Good man Grandet," but there were not many of them left, and they were rapidly disappearing year by year.

In 1789 Grandet was a master cooper, in a very good way of business, who could read and write and cast accounts. When the French Republic, having confiscated the lands of the Church in the district of Saumur, proceeded to sell them by auction, the cooper was forty years of age, and had just married the daughter of a wealthy timber merchant. As Grandet possessed at that moment his wife's dowry as well as some considerable amount of ready money of his own, he repaired to the bureau of the *district;* and making due allowance for two hundred double louis offered by his father-in-law to that man of stern morals, the Republican who conducted the sale, the cooper acquired some of the best vineland in the neighborhood, an old abbey, and a few little farms, for an old song, to all of which property, though it might be ill-gotten, the law gave him a clear title.

There was little sympathy felt with the Revolution in Saumur. Goodman Grandet was looked upon as a bold spirit, a Republican, a patriot, an "advanced thinker," and whatnot; but all the "thinking" the cooper ever did turned simply and solely on the subject of his vines. He

was nominated as a member of the administration of the district of Saumur, and exercised a pacific influence both in politics and in commerce. Politically, he befriended the ci-devants, and did all that he could to prevent the sale of their property; commercially, he contracted to supply two thousand hogsheads of white wine to the Republican armies, taking his payment for the aforesaid hogsheads in the shape of certain acres of meadow land belonging to a convent, the property of the nuns having been reserved till the last.

In the days of the Consulate, Master Grandet became mayor; acted prudently in his public capacity, and did very well for himself. Times changed, the Empire was established, and he became *Monsieur* Grandet. But M. Grandet had been looked upon as a red Republican, and Napoleon had no liking for Republicans, so the mayor was replaced by a large landowner, a man with a *de* before his name, and a prospect of one day becoming a baron of the Empire. M. Grandet turned his back upon municipal honors without a shadow of regret. He had looked well after the interests of the town during his term of office, excellent roads had been made, passing in every case by his own domains. His house and land had been assessed very moderately, the burden of the taxes did not fall too grievously upon him; since the assessment, moreover, he had given ceaseless attention and care to the cultivation of his vines, so that they had become the *tête du pays*,* the technical term for those vineyards which produce wine of the finest quality. He had a fair claim to the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and he received it in 1806.

By this time M. Grandet was fifty-seven years old, and his wife about thirty-six. The one child of the marriage was a daughter, a little girl ten years of age. Providence doubtless sought to console M. Grandet for his official downfall, for in this year he succeeded to three fortunes; the total value was matter of conjecture, no certain information being forthcom-

* Lit.: Head of the country.

ing. The first fell in on the death of Mme. de la Gaudinière, Mme. Grandet's mother; the deceased lady had been a de la Bertellière, and her father, old M. de la Bertellière, soon followed her; the third in order was Mme. Gentillet, M. Grandet's grandmother on the mother's side. Old M. de la Bertellière used to call an investment "throwing money away;" the sight of his hoards of gold repaid him better than any rate of interest upon it. The town of Saumur, therefore, roughly calculated the value of the amount that the late de la Bertellière was likely to have saved out of his yearly takings; and M. Grandet received a new distinction which none of our manias for equality can efface—he paid more taxes than any one else in the country round.

He now cultivated a hundred acres of vineyard; in a good year they would yield seven or eight hundred puncheons. He had thirteen little farms, an old abbey (motives of economy had led him to wall up the windows, and so preserve the traceries and stained glass), and a hundred and twenty-seven acres of grazing land, in which three thousand poplars, planted in 1793, were growing taller and larger every year. Finally, he owned the house in which he lived.

In these visible ways his prosperity had increased. As to his capital, there were only two people in a position to make a guess at its probable amount. One of these was the notary, M. Cruchot, who transacted all the necessary business whenever M. Grandet made an investment; and the other was M. des Grassins, the wealthiest banker in the town, who did Grandet many good offices which were unknown to Saumur. Secrets of this nature, involving extensive business transactions, are usually well kept; but the discreet caution of MM. Cruchot and des Grassins did not prevent them from addressing M. Grandet in public with such profound deference that close observers might draw their own conclusions. Clearly the wealth of their late mayor must be prodigious indeed that he should receive such obsequious attention.

There was no one in Saumur who did not fully believe the report which told how, in a secret hiding-place, M. Grandet had a hoard of louis, and how every night he went to look at it, and gave himself up to the inexpressible delight of gazing at the huge heap of gold. He was not the only money-lover in Saumur. Sympathetic observers looked at his eyes and felt that the story was true, for they seemed to have the yellow metallic glitter of the coin over which it was said they had brooded. Nor was this the only sign. Certain small indefinable habits, furtive movements, slight mysterious promptings of greed did not escape the keen observation of fellow-worshipers. There is something vulpine about the eyes of a man who lends money at an exorbitant rate of interest; they gradually and surely contract like those of the gambler, the sensualist, or the courtier; and there is, so to speak, a sort of freemasonry among the passions, a written language of hieroglyphs and signs for those who can read them.

M. Grandet therefore inspired in all around him the respectful esteem which is but the due of a man who has never owed any one a farthing in his life; a just and legitimate tribute to an astute old cooper and vine-grower who knew beforehand with the certainty of an astronomer when five hundred casks would serve for the vintage, and when to have a thousand in readiness; a man who had never lost on any speculation, who had always a stock of empty barrels whenever casks were so dear that they fetched more than the contents were worth; who could store his vintage in his own cellars, and afford to bide his time, so that his puncheons would bring him in a couple of hundred francs, while many a little proprietor who could not wait had to be content with half that amount. His famous vintage in the year 1811, discreetly held, and sold only as good opportunities offered, had been worth two hundred and forty thousand livres to him.

In matters financial M. Grandet might be described as

combining the characteristics of the Bengal tiger and the boa constrictor. He could lay low and wait, crouching, watching for his prey, and make his spring unerringly at last; then the jaws of his purse would unclose, a torrent of coin would be swallowed down, and, as in the case of the gorged reptile, there would be a period of inaction; like the serpent, moreover, he was cold, apathetic, methodical, keeping to his own mysterious times and seasons.

No one could see the man pass without feeling a certain kind of admiration, which was half-dread, half-respect. The tiger's clutch was like steel, his claws were sharp and swift; was there any one in Saumur who had not felt them? Such an one, for instance, wanted to borrow money to buy that piece of land which he had set his heart upon; M. Cruchot had found the money for him—at eleven per cent. And there was So-and-so yonder; M. des Grassins had discounted his bills, but it was at a ruinous rate.

There were not many days when M. Grandet's name did not come up in conversation, in familiar talk in the evenings, or in the gossip of the town. There were people who took a kind of patriotic pride in the old vine-grower's wealth. More than one innkeeper or merchant had found occasion to remark to a stranger with a certain complacency, "There are millionaires in two or three of our firms here, sir; but as for M. Grandet, he himself could hardly tell you how much he was worth!"

In 1816 the shrewdest heads in Saumur set down the value of the cooper's landed property at about four millions; but as, to strike a fair average, he must have drawn something like a hundred thousand francs (they thought) from his property between the years 1793 and 1817, the amount of money he possessed must nearly equal the value of the land. So when M. Grandet's name was mentioned over a game at boston, or a chat about the prospects of the vines, these folk would look wise and remark, "Who is that you are talking

of? Old Grandet? Old Grandet must have five or six millions, there is no doubt about it."

"Then you are cleverer than I am; I have never been able to find out how much he has," M. Cruchot or M. des Grassins would put in, if they overheard the speech.

If any one from Paris mentioned the Rothschilds or M. Laffitte, the good people in Saumur would ask if any of those persons were as rich as M. Grandet? And if the Parisian should answer in the affirmative with a pitying smile, they looked at one another incredulously and flung up their heads. So great a fortune was like a golden mantle; it covered its owner and all that he did. At one time some of the eccentricities of his mode of life gave rise to laughter at his expense; but the satire and the laughter had died out, and M. Grandet still went his way, till at last even his slightest actions came to be taken as precedents, and every trifling thing he said or did carried weight. His remarks, his clothing, his gestures, the way he blinked his eyes, had all been studied with the care with which a naturalist studies the workings of instinct in some wild creature; and no one failed to discern the taciturn and profound wisdom that underlay all these manifestations.

"We shall have a hard winter," they would say; "old Grandet has put on his fur gloves, we must gather the grapes." Or, "Goodman Grandet is laying in a lot of cask staves; there will be plenty of wine this year."

M. Grandet never bought either meat or bread. Part of his rents were paid in kind, and every week his tenants brought in poultry, eggs, butter, and wheat sufficient for the needs of his household. Moreover, he owned a mill, and the miller, besides paying rent, came over to fetch a certain quantity of corn, and brought him back both the bran and the flour. Big Nanon, the one maidservant, baked all the bread once a week on Saturday mornings (though she was not so young as she had been). Others of the tenants were

market gardeners, and M. Grandet had arranged that these were to keep him supplied with fresh vegetables. Of fruit there was no lack; indeed, he sold a good deal of it in the market. Firewood was gathered from his own hedges, or taken from old stumps of trees that grew by the sides of his fields. His tenants chopped up the wood, carted it into the town, and obligingly stacked his faggots for him, receiving in return—his thanks. So he seldom had occasion to spend money. His only known items of expenditure were for sacramental bread, for sittings in the church for his wife and daughter, their dress, Nanon's wages, renewals of the linings of Nanon's saucepans, repairs about the house, candles, rates and taxes, and the necessary outlays of money for improvements. He had recently acquired six hundred acres of woodland, and, being unable to look after it himself, had induced a keeper belonging to a neighbor to attend to it, promising to repay the man for his trouble. After this purchase had been made, and not before, game appeared on the Grandets' table.

Grandet's manners were distinctly homely. He did not say very much. He expressed his ideas, as a rule, in brief, sententious phrases, uttered in a low voice. Since the time of the Revolution, when for a while he had attracted some attention, the worthy man had contracted a tiresome habit of stammering as soon as he took part in a discussion or began to speak at any length. He had other peculiarities. He habitually drowned his ideas in a flood of words more or less incoherent; his singular inaptitude for reasoning logically was usually set down to a defective education; but this, like his unwelcome fluency, the trick of stammering, and various other mannerisms, was assumed, and for reasons which, in the course of the story, will be made sufficiently clear. In conversation, moreover, he had other resources: four phrases, like algebraical formulæ, which fitted every case, were always forthcoming to solve every knotty problem in business or domestic life—"I do not know," "I cannot do it," "I will

have nothing to do with it," and "We shall see." He never committed himself; he never said yes or no; he never put anything down in writing. He listened with apparent indifference when he was spoken to, caressing his chin with his right hand, while the back of his left supported his elbow. When once he had formed his opinion in any matter of business, he never changed it; but he pondered long even over the smallest transactions. When in the course of deep and weighty converse he had managed to fathom the intentions of an antagonist, who meanwhile flattered himself that *he* at last knew where to have Grandet, the latter was wont to say, "I must talk it over with my wife before I can give a definite answer." In business matters the wife, whom he had reduced to the most abject submission, was unquestionably a most convenient support and screen.

He never paid visits, never dined away from home, nor asked any one to dinner; his movements were almost noiseless; he seemed to carry out his principles of economy in everything; to make no useless sound, to be chary of spending even physical energy. His respect for the rights of ownership was so habitual that he never displaced nor disturbed anything belonging to another. And yet, in spite of the low tones of his voice, in spite of his discretion and cautious bearing, the cooper's real character showed itself in his language and manners, and this was more especially the case in his own house, where he was less on his guard than elsewhere.

As to Grandet's exterior. He was a broad, square-shouldered, thick-set man, about five feet high; his legs were thin (he measured perhaps twelve inches round the calves), his knee-joints large and prominent. He had a bullet-shaped head, a sun-burned face, scarred with the smallpox, and a narrow chin; there was no trace of a curve about the lines of his mouth. He possessed a set of white teeth, eyes with the expression of stony avidity in them with which the basilisk is

credited, a deeply-furrowed brow on which there were prominences not lacking in significance, hair that had once been of a sandy hue, but which was now fast turning gray; so that thoughtless youngsters, rash enough to make jokes on so serious a subject, would say that M. Grandet's very hair was "gold and silver." On his nose, which was broad and blunt at the tip, was a variegated wen; gossip affirmed, not without some appearance of truth, that spite and rancor were the cause of this affection. There was a dangerous cunning about this face, although the man, indeed, was honest according to the letter of the law; it was a selfish face; there were but two things in the world for which its owner cared—the delights of hoarding wealth, in the first place, and, in the second, the only being who counted for anything in his estimation, his daughter Eugénie, his only child, who one day should inherit that wealth. His attitude, manner, bearing, and everything about him plainly showed that he had the belief in himself which is the natural outcome of an unbroken record of successful business speculations. Pliant and smooth-spoken though he might appear to be, M. Grandet was a man of bronze. He was always dressed after the same fashion; in 1819 he looked in this respect exactly as he had looked at any time since 1791. His heavy shoes were secured by leather laces; he wore thick woolen stockings all the year round, knee breeches of chestnut brown homespun, silver buckles, a brown velvet waistcoat adorned with yellow stripes and buttoned up to the throat, a loosely-fitting coat with ample skirts, a black cravat, and a broad-brimmed Quaker-like hat. His gloves, like those of the gendarmerie, were chosen with a view to hard wear; a pair lasted him nearly two years. In order to keep them clean, he always laid them down on the same place on the brim of his hat, till the action had come to be mechanical with him. So much, and no more, Saumur knew of this her citizen.

A few fellow-townspeople, six in all, had the right of entry

to Grandet's house and society. First among these in order of importance was M. Cruchot's nephew. Ever since his appointment as president of the court of first instance, this young man had added the appellation "de Bonfons" to his original name of Cruchot; in time he hoped that the Bonfons would efface the Cruchot, when he meant to drop the Cruchot altogether, and was at no little pains to compass this end. Already he styled himself C. de Bonfons. Any litigant who was so ill inspired as to address him in court as "M. Cruchot" was soon made painfully aware that he had blundered. The magistrate was about thirty-three years of age, and the owner of the estate of Bonfons (*Boni Fontis*), which brought in annually seven thousand livres. In addition to this he had prospects; he would succeed some day to the property of his uncle the notary, and there was yet another uncle besides, the Abbé Cruchot, a dignitary of the chapter of Saint Martin of Tours; both relatives were commonly reported to be men of substance. The three Cruchots, with a goodly number of kinsfolk, connected too by marriage with a score of other houses, formed a sort of party in the town, like the family of the Medicis in Florence long ago; and, like the Medicis, the Cruchots had their rivals—their Pazzi.

Mme. des Grassins, the mother of a son twenty-three years of age, came assiduously to take a hand at cards with Mme. Grandet, hoping to marry her own dear Adolphe to Mademoiselle Eugénie. She had a powerful ally in her husband the banker, who had secretly rendered the old miser many a service, and who could give opportune aid on her field of battle. The three des Grassins had likewise their host of adherents, their cousins and trusty auxiliaries.

The Abbé (the Talleyrand of the Cruchot faction), well supported by his brother the notary, closely disputed the ground with the banker's wife; they meant to carry off the wealthy heiress for their nephew the president. The struggle between the two parties for the prize of the hand of Eugénie

Grandet was an open secret; all Saumur watched it with the keenest interest. Which would Mlle. Grandet marry? Would it be M. le Président or M. Adolphe des Grassins? Some solved the problem by saying that M. Grandet would give his daughter to neither. The old cooper (said they) was consumed with an ambition to have a peer of France for his son-in-law, and he was on the lookout for a peer of France, who for the consideration of an income of three hundred thousand livres would find all the past, present, and future barrels of the Grandets no obstacle to a match. Others demurred to this, and urged that both M. and Mme. des Grassins came of a good family, that they had wealth enough for anything, that Adolphe was a very good-looking, pretty behaved young man, and that unless the Grandets had a Pope's nephew somewhere in the background, they ought to be satisfied with a match in every way so suitable; for they were nobodies after all; all Saumur had seen Grandet going about with an adze in his hands, and, moreover, he had worn the red cap of Liberty in his time.

The more astute observers remarked that M. Cruchot de Bonfons was free of the house in the High Street, while his rival only visited there on Sundays. Some maintained that Mme. des Grassins, being on more intimate terms with the women of the house, had opportunities of inculcating certain ideas which sooner or later must conduce to her success. Others retorted that the Abbé Cruchot had the most insinuating manner in the world, and that with a churchman on one side and a woman on the other the chances were about even.

"It is gown against cassock," said a local wit.

Those whose memories went farther back said that the Grandets were too prudent to let all that property go out of the family. Mlle. Eugénie Grandet of Saumur would be married one of these days to the son of the other M. Grandet of Paris, a rich wholesale wine merchant. To these both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were wont to reply as follows:

"In the first place, the brothers have not met twice in thirty years. Then M. Grandet of Paris is ambitious for that son of his. He himself is mayor of his division of the department, a deputy, a colonel of the National Guard, and a judge of the tribunal of commerce. He does not own to any relationship with the Grandets of Saumur, and is seeking to connect himself with one of Napoleon's dukes."

What will not people say of an heiress? Eugénie Grandet was a stock subject of conversation for twenty leagues round; nay, in public conveyances, even as far as Angers on the one hand and Blois on the other!

In the beginning of the year 1811 the Cruchotins gained a signal victory over the Grassinistes. The young Marquis de Froidfond being compelled to realize his capital, the estate of Froidfond, celebrated for its park and its handsome château, was for sale; together with its dependent farms, rivers, fish-ponds, and forest; altogether it was worth three million francs. M. Cruchot, President Cruchot, and the Abbé Cruchot by uniting their forces had managed to prevent a proposed division into small lots. The notary made an uncommonly good bargain for his client, representing to the young Marquis that the purchase money of the small lots could only be collected after endless trouble and expense, and that he would have to sue a large proportion of the purchasers for it; while here was M. Grandet, a man whose credit stood high, and who was moreover ready to pay for the land at once in hard coin, it would be better to take M. Grandet's offer. In this way the fair marquisate of Froidfond was swallowed down by M. Grandet, who, to the amazement of Saumur, paid for it in ready money (deducting discount of course) as soon as the required formalities were completed. The news of this transaction traveled far and wide; it reached Orleans, it was spoken of at Nantes.

M. Grandet went to see his château, and on this wise: a cart happened to be returning thither, so he embraced this

opportunity of visiting his newly-acquired property, and took a look round in the capacity of owner. Then he returned to Saumur, well convinced that this investment would bring him in a clear five per cent., and fired with a magnificent ambition; he would add his own bits of land to the marquisate of Froidfond, and everything should lie within a ring fence. For the present he would set himself to replenish his almost exhausted coffers; he would cut down every stick of timber in his copses and forests, and fell the poplars in his meadows.

It is easy after this explanation to understand all that was conveyed by the words, "M. Grandet's house"—the cold, dreary, and silent house at the upper end of the town, under the shadow of the ruined ramparts.

Two pillars supported the arch above the doorway, and for these, as also for the building of the house itself, a porous crumbling stone peculiar to the district along the banks of the Loire had been employed, a kind of tufa so soft that at most it scarcely lasts for two hundred years. Rain and frost had gnawed numerous irregular holes in the surface, with a curious effect; the piers and the voussoirs looked as though they were composed of the vermicular stones often met with in French architecture. The doorway might have been the portal of a gaol. Above the arch there was a long sculptured bas-relief of harder stone, representing the four seasons, four forlorn figures, aged, blackened, and weather-worn. Above the bas-relief there was a projecting ledge of masonry where some chance-sown plants had taken root; yellow pellitory, bind-weed, a plantain or two, and a little cherry tree, that even now had reached a fair height.

The massive door itself was of dark oak, shrunk and warped, and full of cracks; but, feeble as it looked, it was firmly held together by a series of iron nails with huge heads, driven into the wood in a symmetrical design. In the middle there was a small square grating covered with rusty iron bars, which served as an excuse for a door knocker which hung there from

a ring, and struck upon the menacing head a great iron bolt. The knocker itself, oblong in shape, was of the kind that our ancestors used to call a "Jaquemart," and not unlike a huge note of admiration. If an antiquary had examined it carefully, he might have found some traces of the grotesque human head that it once represented, but the features of the typical clown had long since been effaced by constant wear. The little grating had been made in past times of civil war, so that the household might recognize their friends without before admitting them, but now it afforded to inquisitive eyes a view of a dank and gloomy archway, and a flight of broken steps leading to a not unpicturesque garden shut in by thick walls through which the damp was oozing, and a hedge of sickly-looking shrubs. The walls were part of the old fortifications, and up above on the ramparts there were yet other gardens belonging to some of the neighboring houses.

A door beneath the arch of the gateway opened into a large parlor, the principal room on the ground floor. Few people comprehend the importance of this apartment in little towns in Anjou, Berri, and Touraine. The parlor is also the hall, drawing-room, study, and boudoir all in one; it is the stage on which the drama of domestic life is played, the very heart and centre of the home. Hither the hairdresser repaired once in six months to cut M. Grandet's hair. The tenants and the curé, the sous-préfet, and the miller's lad were all alike shown into this room. There were two windows which looked out upon the street, the floor was boarded, the walls were paneled from floor to ceiling, covered with old carvings, and painted gray. The rafters were left visible, and were likewise painted gray, the plaster in intervening spaces was yellow with age.

An old brass clock-case inlaid with arabesques in tortoise-shell stood on the chimney-piece, which was of white stone, and adorned with rude carvings. Above it stood a mirror of a greenish hue, the edges were beveled in order to display the thickness of the glass, and reflected a thin streak of col-

ored light into the room, which was caught again by the polished surface of another mirror of Damascus steel, which hung upon the wall.

Two branched sconces of gilded copper which adorned either end of the chimney-piece answered a double purpose. The branch roses which served as candle-sockets were removable, and the main stem, fitted into an antique copper contrivance on a blúish marble pedestal, did duty as a candlestick for ordinary days.

The old-fashioned chairs were covered with tapestry, on which the fables of La Fontaine were depicted; but a thorough knowledge of the author was required to make out the subjects, for the colors had faded badly, and the outlines of the figures were hardly visible through a multitude of darns. Four sideboards occupied the four corners of the room, each of these articles of furniture terminating in a tier of very dirty shelves. An old inlaid card-table with a chess-board marked out upon its surface stood in the space between the two windows, and on the wall, above the table, hung an oval barometer in a dark wooden setting, adorned by a carved bunch of ribbons; they had been gilt ribbons once upon a time, but generations of flies had wantonly obscured the gilding, till its existence had become problematical. Two portraits in pastel hung on the wall opposite the fireplace. One was believed to represent Mme. Grandet's grandfather, old M. de la Bertellière, as a lieutenant in the Guards, and the other the late Mme. Gentillet, as a shepherdess.

Crimson curtains of *gros de Tours* were hung in the windows and fastened back with silk cords and huge tassels. This luxurious upholstery, so little in harmony with the manners and customs of the Grandets, had been included in the purchase of the house, like the pier-glass, the brass timepiece, the tapestry-covered chairs, and the rosewood corner sideboards. In the further window stood a straw-bottom chair, raised on blocks of wood, so that Mme. Grandet could watch the passers-by

as she sat. A work-table of cherry wood, bleached and faded by the light, filled the other window space, and close beside it Eugénie Grandet's little armchair was set.

The lives of mother and daughter had flowed on tranquilly for fifteen years. Day after day, from April to November, they sat at work in the windows; but the first day of the latter month found them beside the fire, where they took up their positions for the winter. Grandet would not allow a fire to be lighted in the room before that date, nor again after the 31st of March, let the early days of spring or of autumn be cold as they might. Big Nanon managed by stealth to fill a little brasier with glowing ashes from the kitchen fire, and in this way the chilly evenings of April and October were rendered tolerable for Mme. and Mlle. Grandet. All the household linen was kept in repair by the mother and daughter; and so conscientiously did they devote their days to this duty (no light task in truth), that if Eugénie wanted to embroider a collarette for her mother she was obliged to steal the time from her hours of slumber, and to resort to a deception to obtain from her father the candle by which she worked. For a long while past it had been the miser's wont to dole out the candles to his daughter and big Nanon in the same way that he gave out the bread and the other matters daily required by the household.

Perhaps big Nanon was the one servant in existence who could and would have endured her master's tyrannous rule. Every one in the town used to envy M. and Mme. Grandet. "Big Nanon," so called on account of her height of five feet eight inches, had been a part of the Grandet household for thirty-five years. She was held to be one of the richest servants in Saumur, and this on a yearly wage of seventy livres! The seventy livres had accumulated for thirty-five years, and quite recently Nanon had deposited four thousand livres with M. Cruchot for the purchase of an annuity. This result of a long and persevering course of thrift appealed to

the imagination—it seemed tremendous. There was not a maidservant in Saumur but was envious of the poor woman, who by the time she had reached her sixtieth year would have scraped together enough to keep herself from want in her old age; but no one thought of the hard life and all the toil which had gone to the making of that little hoard.

Thirty-five years ago, when Nanon had been a homely, hard-featured girl of two-and-twenty, she had not been able to find a place because her appearance had been so much against her. Poor Nanon! it was really very hard. If her head had been set on the shoulders of a grenadier it would have been greatly admired, but there is a fitness in things, and Nanon's style of beauty was inappropriate. She had been a herdswoman on a farm for a time, till the farmhouse had been burnt down, and then it was that, full of the robust courage that shrinks from nothing, she came to seek service in Saumur.

At that time M. Grandet was thinking of marriage, and already determined to set up housekeeping. The girl, who had been rebuffed from door to door, came under his notice. He was a cooper, and therefore a good judge of physical strength; he foresaw at once how useful this feminine Hercules could be, a strongly-made woman who stood planted as firmly on her feet as an oak tree rooted in the soil where it has grown for two generations, a woman with square shoulders, large hips, and hands like a ploughman's, and whose honesty was as unquestionable as her virtue. He was not dismayed by a martial countenance, a disfiguring wart or two, a complexion like burnt clay, and a pair of sinewy arms; neither did Nanon's rags alarm the cooper, whose heart was not yet hardened against misery. He took the poor girl into his service, gave her food, clothes, shoes, and wages. Nanon found her hard life not intolerably hard. Nay, she secretly shed tears of joy at being so treated; she felt a sincere attachment for this master, who expected as much from her as ever feudal lord required of a serf.

Nanon did all the work of the house. She did the cooking and the washing, carrying all the linen down to the Loire and bringing it back on her shoulders. She rose at daybreak and went to bed late. It was she who, without any assistance, cooked for the vintagers in the autumn, and looked sharply after the market-folk. She watched over her master's property like a faithful dog, and with a blind belief in him; she obeyed his most arbitrary commands without a murmur—his whims were law to her.

After twenty years of service, in the famous year 1811, when the vintage had been gathered in after unheard-of toil and trouble, Grandet made up his mind to present Nanon with his old watch, the only gift she had ever received from him. She certainly had the reversion of his old shoes (which happened to fit her), but as a rule they were so far seen into already that they were of little use to any one else, and could not be looked upon as a present. Sheer necessity had made the poor girl so penurious that Grandet grew quite fond of her at last, and regarded her with the same sort of affection that a man gives to his dog; and as for Nanon, she cheerfully wore the collar of servitude set round with spikes that she had ceased to feel. Grandet might stint the day's allowance of bread, but she did not grumble. The fare might be scanty and poor, but Nanon's spirits did not suffer, and her health appeared to benefit; there was never any illness in that house.

And then Nanon was one of the family. She shared every mood of Grandet's, laughed when he laughed, was depressed when he was out of spirits, took her views of the weather or of the temperature from him, and worked with him and for him. This equality was an element of sweetness which made up for many hardships in her lot. Out in the vineyards her master had never said a word about the small peaches, plums, or nectarines eaten under the trees that are planted between the rows of vines.

"Come, Nanon, take as much as you like," he would say, in years when the branches were bending beneath their load, and fruit was so abundant that the farmers round about were forced to give it to the pigs.

For the peasant girl, for the outdoor farm servant, who had known nothing but harsh treatment from childhood, for the girl who had been rescued from starvation by charity, old Grandet's equivocal laughter was like a ray of sunshine. Besides, Nanon's simple nature and limited intelligence could only entertain one idea at a time; and during those thirty-five years of service one picture was constantly present to her mind—she saw herself a barefooted girl in rags standing at the gate of M. Grandet's timber-yard, and heard the sound of the cooper's voice, saying, "What is it, lassie?" and the warmth of gratitude filled her heart to-day as it did then. Sometimes, as he watched her, the thought came up in Grandet's mind how that no syllable of praise or admiration had ever been breathed in her ears, that all the tender feelings that a woman inspires had no existence for her, and that she might well appear before God one day as chaste as the Virgin Mary herself. And such times, prompted by a sudden impulse of pity, he would exclaim, "Poor Nanon!"

The remark was always followed by an indescribable look from the old servant. The words so spoken from time to time were separate links in a long and unbroken chain of friendship. But in this pity in the miser's soul, which gave a thrill of pleasure to the lonely woman, there was something indescribably revolting; it was a cold-blooded pity that stirred the cooper's heart; it was a luxury that cost him nothing. But for Nanon it meant the height of happiness! Who will not likewise say, "Poor Nanon!" God will one day know His angels by the tones of their voices and by the sorrow hidden in their hearts.

There were plenty of households in Saumur where servants were better treated, but where their employers, nevertheless,

enjoyed small comfort in return. Wherefore people asked, "What have the Grandets done to that big Nanon of theirs that she should be so attached to them? She would go through fire and water to serve them!"

Her kitchen, with its barred windows that looked out into the yard, was always clean, cold and tidy, a thorough miser's kitchen, in which nothing was allowed to be wasted. When Nanon had washed her plates and dishes, put the remains of the dinner into the safe, and raked out the fire, she left her kitchen (which was only separated from the dining-room by the breadth of a passage), and sat down to spin hemp in the company of her employers, for a single candle must suffice for the whole family in the evening. The serving-maid slept in a little dark closet at the end of the passage, lit only by a borrowed light. Nanon had an iron constitution and sound health, which enabled her to sleep with impunity year after year in this hole, where she could hear the slightest sound that broke the heavy silence brooding day and night over the house; she lay like a watch-dog, with one ear open; she was never off duty, not even while she slept.

Some description of the rest of the house will be necessary in the course of the story in connection with later events; but the parlor, wherein all the splendor and luxury of the house was concentrated, has been sketched already, and the emptiness and bareness of the upper rooms can be surmised for the present.

It was in the middle of November, in the year 1819, twilight was coming on, and big Nanon was lighting a fire in the parlor for the first time. It was a festival day in the calendar of the Cruchotins and Grassinistes, wherefore the six antagonists were preparing to set forth, all armed cap-à-pie, for a contest in which each side meant to outdo the other in proofs of friendship. The Grandets' parlor was to be the scene of action. That morning Mme. and Mlle. Grandet, duly at-

tended by Nanon, had repaired to the parish church to hear mass. All Saumur had seen them go, and every one had been put in mind of the fact that it was Eugénie's birthday. M. Cruchot, the Abbé Cruchot, and M. C. de Bonfons, therefore, having calculated the hour when dinner would be over, were eager to be first in the field, and to arrive before the Grassinistes to congratulate Mlle. Grandet. All three carried huge bunches of flowers gathered in their little garden plots, but the stalks of the magistrate's bouquet were ingeniously bound round by a white satin ribbon with a tinsel fringe at the ends.

In the morning M. Grandet had gone to Eugénie's room before she had left her bed, and had solemnly presented her with a rare gold coin. It was her father's wont to surprise her in this way twice every year—once on her birthday, once on the equally memorable day of her patron saint. Mme. Grandet usually gave her daughter a winter or a summer dress, according to circumstances. The two dresses and two gold coins, which she received on her father's birthday and on New Year's Day, altogether amounted to an annual income of nearly a hundred crowns; Grandet loved to watch the money accumulating in her hands. He did not part with his money; he felt that it was only like taking it out of one box and putting it into another; and besides, was it not, so to speak, fostering a proper regard for gold in his heiress? She was being trained in the way in which she should go. Now and then he asked for an account of her wealth (formerly swelled by gifts from the La Bertellières), and each time he did so he used to tell her, "This will be your dozen when you are married."

The *dozen* is an old-world custom which has lost none of its force, and is still religiously adhered to in several midland districts in France. In Berri or Anjou, when a daughter is married, it is incumbent upon her parents, or upon her bridegroom's family, to give her a purse containing either a dozen, or twelve dozen, or twelve hundred gold or silver coins, the

amount varying with the means of the family. The poorest herd-girl would not be content without her *dozen* when she married, even if she could only bring twelve pence as a dower. They talk even yet at Issoudun of a fabulous dozen once given to a rich heiress, which consisted of a hundred and forty-four Portuguese moidores; and when Catherine de Medicis was married to Henry II., her uncle, Clement VII., gave the bride a dozen antique gold medals of priceless value.

Eugénie wore her new dress at dinner, and looked prettier than usual in it; her father was in high good-humor.

"Let us have a fire," he cried, "as it is Eugénie's birthday! It will be a good omen."

"Mademoiselle will be married within the year, that's certain," said big Nanon, as she removed the remains of a goose, that pheasant of the coopers of Saumur.

"There is no one that I know of in Saumur who would do for Eugénie," said Mme. Grandet, with a timid glance at her husband, a glance that revealed how completely her husband's tyranny had broken the poor woman's spirit.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and said merrily, "We must really begin to think about her; the little girl is twenty-three years old to-day."

Neither Eugénie nor her mother said a word, but they exchanged glances; they understood each other.

Mme. Grandet's face was thin and wrinkled and yellow as saffron; she was awkward and slow in her movements, one of those beings who seem born to be tyrannized over. She was a large-boned woman, with a large nose, large eyes, and a prominent forehead; there seemed to be, at first sight, some dim suggestion of a resemblance between her and some shriveled, spongy, dried-up fruit. The few teeth that remained to her were dark and discolored; there were deep lines fretted about her mouth, and her chin was something after the "nut-cracker" pattern. She was a good sort of a woman, and a La Bertellière to the backbone. The Abbé Cruchot had more

than once found occasion to tell her that she had not been so bad looking when she was young, and she did not disagree with him. An angelic sweetness of disposition, the helpless meekness of an insect in the hands of cruel children, a sincere piety, a kindly heart, and an even temper that nothing could ruffle or sour, had gained universal respect and pity for her.

Her appearance might provoke a smile, but she had brought her husband more than three hundred thousand francs, partly as her dowry, partly through bequests. Yet Grandet never gave his wife more than six francs at a time for pocket-money, and she always regarded herself as dependent upon her husband. The meek gentleness of her nature forbade any revolt against his tyranny; but so deeply did she feel the humiliation of her position that she never asked him for a sou, and when M. Cruchot demanded her signature to any document, she always gave it without a word. This foolish sensitive pride, which Grandet constantly and unwittingly hurt, this magnanimity which he was quite incapable of understanding, were Mme. Grandet's dominant characteristics.

Her dress never varied. Her gown was always of the same dull, greenish shade of laventine, and usually lasted her nearly a twelvemonth; the large handkerchief at her throat was of some kind of cotton material; she wore a straw bonnet, and was seldom seen without a black silk apron. She left the house so rarely that her walking shoes were seldom worn out; indeed, her requirements were very few, she never wanted anything for herself. Sometimes it would occur to Grandet that it was a long while since he had given the last six francs to his wife, and his conscience would prick him a little; and after the vintage, when he sold his wine, he always demanded pin-money for his wife over and above the bargain. These four or five louis out of the pockets of the Dutch or Belgian merchants were Mme. Grandet's only certain source of yearly income. But although she received her five louis, her husband would often say to her, as if they had one common purse,

"Have you a few sous that you can lend me?" and she, poor woman, glad that it was in her power to do anything for the man whom her confessor always taught her to regard as her lord and master, used to return to him more than one crown out of her little store in the course of the winter. Every month, when Grandet disbursed the five-franc piece which he allowed his daughter for needles, thread, and small expenses of dress, he remarked to his wife (after he had buttoned up his pocket), "And how about you, mother; do you want anything?" And with a mother's dignity Mme. Grandet would answer, "We will talk about that by-and-by, dear."

Her magnanimity was entirely lost upon Grandet; he considered that he did very handsomely by his wife. The philosophic mind, contemplating the Nanons, the Mme. Grandets, the Eugénies of this life, holds that the Author of the universe is a profound satirist, and who will quarrel with the conclusion of the philosophic mind? After the dinner, when the question of Eugénie's marriage had been raised for the first time, Nanon went up to M. Grandet's room to fetch a bottle of black-currant cordial, and very nearly lost her footing on the staircase as she came down.

"Great stupid! Are *you* going to take to tumbling about?" inquired her master.

"It is all along of the step, sir; it gave way. The staircase isn't safe."

"She is quite right," said Mme. Grandet. "You ought to have had it mended long ago. Eugénie all but sprained her foot on it yesterday."

"Here," said Grandet, who saw that Nanon looked very pale, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, and you have nearly fallen downstairs, take a drop of black-currant cordial; that will put you right again."

"I deserve it, too, upon my word," said Nanon. "Many a one would have broken the bottle in my place; I should have broken my elbow first, holding it up to save it."

"Poor Nanon!" muttered Grandet, pouring out the black-currant cordial for her.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Eugénie, looking at her in concern.

"No, I managed to break the fall; I came down on my side."

"Well," said Grandet, "as to-day is Eugénie's birthday, I will mend your step for you. Somehow, you women-folk cannot manage to put your foot down in the corner, where it is still solid and safe."

Grandet took up the candle, left the three women without any other illumination in the room than the bright dancing firelight, and went to the bakehouse, where tools, nails, and odd pieces of wood were kept.

"Do you want any help?" Nanon called to him, when the first blow sounded on the staircase.

"No! no! I am an old hand at it," answered the cooper.

At this very moment, while Grandet was doing the repairs himself to his worm-eaten staircase, and whistling with all his might as memories of his young days came up in his mind, the three Cruchots knocked at the house-door.

"Oh, it's you, is it, M. Cruchot?" asked Nanon, as she took a look through the small square grating.

"Yes," answered the magistrate.

Nanon opened the door, and the glow of the firelight shone on the three Cruchots, who were groping in the archway.

"Oh! you have come to help us keep her birthday," Nanon said, as the scent of flowers reached her.

"Excuse me a moment, gentlemen," cried Grandet, who recognized the voices of his acquaintances; "I am your very humble servant! There is no pride about me; I am patching up a broken stair here myself."

"Go on, go on, M. Grandet! The charcoal burner is mayor in his own house," said the magistrate sententiously.

Nobody saw the allusion, and he had his laugh all to himself. Mme. and Mlle. Grandet rose to greet them. The magistrate took advantage of the darkness to speak to Eugénie.

"Will you permit me, mademoiselle, on the anniversary of your birthday, to wish you a long succession of prosperous years, and may you for long preserve the health with which you are blessed at present."

He then offered her such a bouquet of flowers as was seldom seen in Saumur; and, taking the heiress by both arms, gave her a kiss on either side of the throat, a fervent salute which brought the color into Eugénie's face. The magistrate was tall and thin, somewhat resembling a rusty nail; this was his notion of paying court.

"Do not disturb yourselves," said Grandet, coming back into the room. "Fine doings these of yours, M. le Président, on high days and holidays!"

"With mademoiselle beside him every day would be a holiday for my nephew," answered the Abbé Cruchot, also armed with a bouquet; and with that the Abbé kissed Eugénie's hand. As for M. Cruchot, he kissed her unceremoniously on both cheeks, saying, "This sort of thing makes us feel older, eh? A whole year older every twelve months."

Grandet set down the candle in front of the brass clock on the chimney-piece; whenever a joke amused him he kept on repeating it till it was worn threadbare; he did so now.

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday," he said, "let us have an illumination."

He carefully removed the branches from the two sconces, fitted the sockets into either pedestal, took from Nanon's hands a whole new candle wrapped in a scrap of paper, fixed it firmly in the socket, and lighted it. Then he went over to his wife and took up his position beside her, looking by turns at his daughter, his friends, and the two lighted candles.

The Abbé Cruchot was a fat, dumpy little man with a well-worn sandy peruke. His peculiar type of face might have be-

longed to some old lady whose life is spent at the card-table. At this moment he was stretching out his feet and displaying a very neat and strong pair of shoes with silver buckles on them.

"The des Grassins have not come round?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered Grandet.

"Are they sure to come?" put in the old notary, with various contortions of a countenance as full of holes as a colander.

"Oh! yes, I think they will come," said Mme. Grandet.

"Is the vintage over?" asked President de Bonfons, addressing Grandet; "are all your grapes gathered?"

"Yes, everywhere!" answered the old vine-grower, rising and walking up and down the length of the room; he straightened himself up as he spoke with a conscious pride that appeared in that word "everywhere."

As he passed by the door that opened into the passage, Grandet caught a glimpse of the kitchen; the fire was still alight, a candle was burning there, and big Nanon was about to begin her spinning by the hearth; she did not wish to intrude upon the birthday party.

"Nanon!" he called, stepping out into the passage. "Nanon! why ever don't you rake out the fire; put out the candle and come in here! *Pardieu!* the room is large enough to hold us all."

"But you are expecting grand visitors, sir."

"Have you any objection to them? They are all descended from Adam just as much as you are."

Grandet went back to the president.

"Have you sold your wine?" he inquired.

"Not I; I am holding it. If the wine is good now, it will be better still in two years' time. The growers, as you know, of course, are in a ring, and mean to keep prices up. The Belgians shall not have it all their own way this year. And if they go away, well and good, let them go; they will come back again."

"Yes; but we must hold firm," said Grandet in a tone that made the magistrate shudder.

"Suppose he should sell his wine behind our backs?" he thought.

At that moment another knock at the door announced the des Grassins, and interrupted a quiet talk between Mme. Grandet and the Abbé Cruchot.

Mme. des Grassins was a dumpy, lively, little person with a pink-and-white complexion, one of those women for whom the course of life in a country town has flowed on with almost claustral tranquillity, and who, thanks to this regular and virtuous existence, are still youthful at the age of forty. They are something like the late roses in autumn, which are fair and pleasant to the sight, but the almost scentless petals have a pinched look, there is a vague suggestion of coming winter about them. She dressed tolerably well, her gowns came from Paris, she was a leader of society in Saumur, and received on certain evenings. Her husband had been a quartermaster in the Imperial Guard, but he had retired from the army with a pension, after being badly wounded at Austerlitz. In spite of his consideration for Grandet, he still retained, or affected to retain, the bluff manners of a soldier.

"Good-day, Grandet," he said, holding out his hand to the cooper with that wonted air of superiority with which he eclipsed the Cruchot faction. "Mademoiselle," he added, addressing Eugénie, after a bow to Mme. Grandet, "you are always charming, ever good and fair, and what more can one wish you?"

With that he presented her with a small box, which a servant was carrying, and which contained a Cape heath, a plant only recently introduced into Europe, and very rare.

Mme. des Grassins embraced Eugénie very affectionately, squeezed her hand, and said, "I have commissioned Adolphe to give you my little birthday gift."

A tall, fair-haired young man, somewhat pallid and weakly

in appearance, came forward at this; his manners were passably good, although he seemed to be shy. He had just completed his law studies in Paris, where he had managed to spend eight or ten thousand francs over and above his allowance. He now kissed Eugénie on both cheeks, and laid a workbox with gilded silver fittings before her; it was a showy, trumpery thing enough, in spite of the little shield on the lid, on which an E. G. had been engraved in Gothic characters, a detail which gave an imposing air to the whole. Eugénie raised the lid with a little thrill of pleasure, the happiness was as complete as it was unlooked for—the happiness that brings bright color into a young girl's face and makes her tremble with delight. Her eyes turned to her father as if to ask whether she might accept the gift; M. Grandet answered the mute inquiry with a "Take it, my daughter!" in tones which would have made the reputation of an actor. The three Cruchots stood dumfounded when they saw the bright, delighted glance that Adolphe des Grassins received from the heiress, who seemed to be dazzled by such undreamed-of splendors.

M. des Grassins offered his snuff-box to Grandet, took a pinch himself, brushed off a few stray specks from his blue coat and from the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at his button-hole, and looked at the Cruchots, as though to say, "Parry that thrust if you can!" Mme. des Grassins' eyes fell on the blue glass jars in which the Cruchots' bouquets had been set. She looked at their gifts with the innocent air of pretended interest which a satirical woman knows how to assume upon occasion. It was a delicate crisis. The Abbé got up and left the others, who were forming a circle round the fire, and joined Grandet in his promenade up and down the room. When the two elders had reached the embrasure of the window at the farther end, away from the group by the fire, the priest said in the miser's ear, "Those people yonder are throwing their money out of the windows."

"What does that matter to me, so long as it comes my way?" the old vine-grower answered.

"If you had a mind to give your daughter golden scissors, you could very well afford it," said the Abbé.

"I shall give her something better than scissors," Grandet answered.

"What an idiot my nephew is!" thought the Abbé, as he looked at the magistrate, whose dark, ill-favored countenance was set off to perfection at that moment by a shock head of hair. "Why couldn't *he* have hit on some expensive piece of foolery?"

"We will take a hand at cards, Mme. Grandet," said Mme. des Grassins.

"But as we are all here, there are enough of us for two tables——"

"As to-day is Eugénie's birthday, why not all play together at loto?" said old Grandet; "these two children could join in the game."

The old cooper, who never played at any game whatever, pointed to his daughter and Adolphe.

"Here, Nanon, move the tables out."

"We will help you, Mademoiselle Nanon," said Mme. des Grassins cheerfully; she was thoroughly pleased, because she had pleased Eugénie.

"I have never seen anything so pretty anywhere," the heiress had said to her. "I have never been so happy in my life before."

"It was Adolphe who chose it," said Mme. des Grassins in the girl's ear; "he brought it from Paris."

"Go your ways, accursed scheming woman," muttered the magistrate to himself. "If you or your husband ever find yourselves in a court of law, you shall be hard put to it to gain the day."

The notary, calmly seated in his corner, watched the Abbé, and said to himself, "The des Grassins may do what they like;

my fortune and my brother's and my nephew's fortunes altogether mount up to eleven hundred thousand francs. The des Grassins, at the very utmost, have only half as much, and they have a daughter. Let them give whatever they like, all will be ours some day—the heiress and her presents too."

Two tables were in readiness by half-past eight o'clock. Mme. de Grassins, with her winning ways, had succeeded in placing her son next to Eugénie. The actors in the scene, so commonplace in appearance, so full of interest beneath the surface, each provided with slips of pasteboard of various colors and blue glass counters, seemed to be listening to the little jokes made by the old notary, who never drew a number without making some remark upon it, but they were all thinking of M. Grandet's millions. The old cooper himself eyed the group with a certain self-complacency; he looked at Mme. des Grassins with her pink feathers and her fresh toilet, at the banker's soldierly face, at Adolphe, at the magistrate, at the Abbé and the notary, and within himself he said: "They are all after my crowns; that is what they are here for. It is for my daughter that they come to be bored here. Aha! and my daughter is for none of them, and all these people are so many harpoons to be used in my fishing."

The merriment of this family party, the laughter, only sincere when it came from Eugénie or her mother, and to which the low whirring of Nanon's spinning-wheel made an accompaniment, the sordid meanness playing for high stakes, the young girl herself, like some rare bird, the innocent victim of its high value, tracked down and snared by specious pretenses of friendship; taken altogether, it was a sorry comedy that was being played in the old gray-painted parlor, by the dim light of the two candles. Was it not, however, a drama of all time, played out everywhere all over the world, but here reduced to its simplest expression? Old Grandet towered above the other actors, turning all this sham affection to his own account, and reaping a rich harvest from

this simulated friendship. His face hovered above the scene like the interpretation of an evil dream. He was like the incarnation of the one god who yet finds worshipers in modern times, of money and the power of wealth.

With him the gentler and sweeter impulses of human life only occupied the second place; but they so filled three purer hearts there that there was no room in them for other thoughts—the hearts of Nanon, and of Eugénie and her mother. And yet, how much ignorance mingled with their innocent simplicity! Eugénie and her mother knew nothing of Grandet's wealth; they saw everything through a medium of dim ideas, peculiar to their own narrow world, and neither desired nor despised money, accustomed as they were to do without it. Nor were they conscious of an uncongenial atmosphere; the strength of their feelings, their inner life, made of them a strange exception in this gathering, wholly intent upon material interests. Appalling is the condition of man; there is no drop of happiness in his lot but has its source in ignorance.

Just as Mme. Grandet had won sixteen sous, the largest amount that had ever been punted beneath that roof, and big Nanon was beaming with delight at the sight of Madame pocketing that splendid sum, there was a knock at the house-door, so sudden and so loud that it startled the women for the moment.

"No one in Saumur would knock in that way!" said the notary.

"What do they thump like that for?" said Nanon. "Do they want to break our door down?"

"Who the devil is it?" cried Grandet.

Nanon took up one of the two candles and went to open the door. Grandet followed her.

"Grandet! Grandet!" cried his wife; a vague terror seized her, and she hurried to the door of the room.

The players all looked at each other.

"Suppose we go too?" said M. des Grassins. "That knock means no good, it seemed to me."

But M. des Grassins scarcely caught a glimpse of a young man's face and of a porter who was carrying two huge trunks and an assortment of carpet bags, before Grandet turned sharply on his wife and said—

"Go back to your loto, Mme. Grandet, and leave me to settle with this gentleman here."

With that he slammed the parlor door, and the loto players sat down again, but they were too much excited to go on with the game.

"Is it any one who lives in Saumur, M. des Grassins?" his wife inquired.

"No, a traveler."

"Then he must have come from Paris."

"As a matter of fact," said the notary, drawing out a heavy antique watch, a couple of fingers' breadth in thickness, and not unlike a Dutch punt in shape, "as a matter of fact, it is nine o'clock. *Peste!* the mail-coach is not often behind time."

"Is he young looking?" put in the Abbé Cruchot.

"Yes," answered M. des Grassins. "The luggage he has with him must weigh three hundred kilos at least."

"Nanon does not come back," said Eugénie.

"It must be some relation of yours," the president remarked.

"Let us put down our stakes," said Mme. Grandet gently. "M. Grandet was vexed, I could tell that by the sound of his voice, and perhaps he would be displeased if he came in and found us all discussing his affairs."

"Mademoiselle," Adolphe addressed his neighbor, "it will be your cousin Grandet no doubt, a very nice-looking young fellow whom I once met at a ball at M. de Nucingen's."

Adolphe went no further, his mother stamped on his foot

under the table. Aloud, she asked him for two sous for his stake, adding in an undertone, meant only for his ears, "Will you hold your tongue, you great silly!"

They could hear the footsteps of Nanon and the porter on the staircase, but Grandet returned to the room almost immediately, and just behind him came the traveler who had excited so much curiosity, and loomed so large in the imaginations of those assembled; indeed, his sudden descent into their midst might be compared to the arrival of a snail in a beehive, or the entrance of a peacock into some humdrum village poultry-yard.

"Take a seat near the fire," said Grandet, addressing the stranger.

The young man looked round the room and bowed very gracefully before seating himself. The men rose and bowed politely in return, the women courtesied rather ceremoniously.

"You are feeling cold, I expect, sir," said Mme. Grandet; "you have no doubt come from——"

"Just like the women!" broke in the good man, looking up from the letter which he held in his hand. "Do let the gentleman have a little peace."

"But, father, perhaps the gentleman wants something after his journey," said Eugénie.

"He has a tongue in his head," the vine-grower answered severely.

The stranger alone felt any surprise at this scene, the rest were quite used to the worthy man and his arbitrary behavior. But after the two inquiries had received the summary answers, the stranger rose and stood with his back to the fire, held out a foot to the blaze, so as to warm the soles of his boots, and said to Eugénie, "Thank you, cousin, I dined at Tours. And I do not require anything," he added, glancing at Grandet; "I am not in the least tired."

"Do you come from Paris?" (it was Mme. des Grassins who now put the inquiry).

M. Charles (for this was the name borne by the son of M. Grandet of Paris), hearing some one question him, took out an eyeglass that hung suspended from his neck by a cord, fixed it in his eye, made a deliberate survey of the objects upon the table and of the people sitting round it, eyed Mme. des Grassins very coolly, and said (when he had completed his survey), "Yes, madame. You are playing at loto, aunt," he added; "pray go on with your game, it is too amusing to be broken off——"

"I knew it was the cousin," thought Mme. des Grassins, and she gave him a side glance from time to time.

"Forty-seven," cried the old Abbé. "Keep count. Mme. des Grassins, that is your number, is it not?"

M. des Grassins put down a counter on his wife's card; the lady herself was not thinking of loto, her mind was full of melancholy forebodings, she was watching Eugénie and the cousin from Paris. She saw how the heiress now and then stole a glance at her cousin, and the banker's wife could easily discover in those glances a *crescendo* of amazement or of curiosity.

There was certainly a strange contrast between M. Charles Grandet, a handsome young man of two-and-twenty, and the worthy provincials, who, tolerably disgusted already with his aristocratic airs, were scornfully studying the stranger with a view to making game of him. This requires some explanation.

At two-and-twenty childhood is not so very far away, and youth, on the borderland, has not finally and forever put away childish things; Charles Grandet's vanity was childish, but perhaps ninety-nine young men out of a hundred would have been carried away by it and behaved exactly as he did.

Some days previously his father had bidden him to go on a visit of several months to his uncle in Saumur; perhaps M. Grandet (of Paris) had Eugénie in his mind. Charles, launched in this way into a country town for the first time in his life, had his own ideas. He would make his appearance in

provincial society with all the superiority of a young man of fashion; he would reduce the neighborhood to despair by his splendor; he would inaugurate a new epoch, and introduce all the latest and most ingenious refinement of Parisian luxury. To be brief, he meant to devote more time at Saumur than in Paris to the care of his nails, and to carry out schemes of elaborate and studied refinements in dress at his leisure; there should be none of the not ungraceful negligence of attire which a young man of fashion sometimes affects.

So Charles took with him into the country the most charming of shooting costumes, the sweetest thing in hunting-knives and sheaths, and a perfect beauty of a rifle. He packed up a most tasteful collection of waistcoats: gray, white, black, beetle-green shot with gold, speckled and spangled; double waistcoats, waistcoats with rolled collars, stand-up collars, turned-down collars, open at the throat, buttoned up to the chin with a row of gold buttons. He took samples of all the ties and cravats in favor at that epoch. He took two of Buisson's coats. He took his finest linen, and the dressing-case with gold fittings that his mother had given him. He took all his dandy's paraphernalia, not forgetting an enchanting little writing-case, the gift of the most amiable of women (for him at least), a great lady whom he called Annette, and who at that moment was traveling with her husband in Scotland, a victim to suspicions which demanded the temporary sacrifice of her happiness.

In short, his cargo of Parisian frivolities was as complete as it was possible to make it; nothing had been omitted, from the horsewhip, useful as a preliminary, to the pair of richly-chased and mounted pistols that terminate a duel. There was all the ploughing gear required by a young idler in the field of life.

His father had told him to travel alone and modestly, and he had obeyed. He had come in the coupé of the diligence, which he secured all to himself; and was not ill-satisfied to

save wear, in this way, to a smart and comfortable traveling carriage which he had ordered, and in which he meant to go to meet his Annette, the aforesaid great lady who——etc., and whom he was to rejoin next June at Baden-Baden.

Charles expected to meet scores of people during his visit to his uncle; he expected to have some shooting on his uncle's land; he expected, in short, to find a large house on a large estate; he had not thought to find his relatives in Saumur at all; he had only found out that they lived there by asking the way to Froidfond, and even after this discovery he expected to see them in a large mansion. But whether his uncle lived in Saumur or at Froidfond, he was determined to make his first appearance properly, so he had assumed a most fascinating traveling costume, made with the simplicity that is the perfection of art, a most *adorable* creation, to use the word which in those days expressed superlative praise of the special qualities of a thing or of a man. At Tours he had summoned a hairdresser, and his handsome chestnut hair was curled afresh. He had changed his linen and put on a black satin cravat, which, in combination with a round collar, made a very becoming setting for a pale and satirical face. A long overcoat, fitting tightly at the waist, gave glimpses of a cashmere waistcoat with a rolled collar, and beneath this again a second waistcoat of some white material. His watch was carelessly thrust into a side pocket, and save in so far as a gold chain secured it to a button-hole, its continuance there appeared to be purely accidental. His gray trousers were buttoned at the sides, and the seams were adorned with designs embroidered in black silk. A pair of gray gloves had nothing to dread from contact with a gold-headed cane, which he managed to admiration. A discriminating taste was evinced throughout the costume, and shone conspicuous in the traveling cap. Only a Parisian, and a Parisian moreover from some remote and lofty sphere, could trick himself out in such attire, and bring all its absurd details

into harmony by coxcombry carried to such a pitch that it ceased to be ridiculous; this young man carried it off, moreover, with a swaggering air befitting a dead shot, conscious of the possession of a handsome pair of pistols and the good graces of an Annette.

If, moreover, you wish to thoroughly understand the surprise with which the Saumurois and the young Parisian mutually regarded each other, you must behold, as did the former, the radiant vision of this elegant traveler shining in the gloomy old room, as well as the figures that composed the family picture that met the stranger's eyes. There sat the Cruchots; try to imagine them.

To begin with, all three took snuff, with utter disregard of personal cleanliness or of the black deposit with which their shirt frills were encrusted. Their limp silk handkerchiefs were twisted into a thick rope, and wound tightly about their necks. Their collars were crumpled and soiled, their linen was dingy; there was such a vast accumulation of underwear in their presses, that it was only necessary to wash twice in the year, and the linen acquired a bad color with lying by. Age and ugliness might have wrought together to produce a masterpiece in them. Their hard-featured, furrowed, and wrinkled faces were in keeping with their creased and threadbare clothing, and both they and their garments were worn, shrunken, twisted out of shape. Dwellers in country places are apt to grow more or less slovenly and careless of their appearance; they cease by degrees to dress for others; the career of a pair of gloves is indefinitely prolonged, there is a general want of freshness and a decided neglect of detail. The slovenliness of the Cruchots, therefore, was not conspicuous; they were in harmony with the rest of the company, for there was one point on which both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed for the most part—they held the fashions in horror.

The Parisian assumed his eyeglass again in order to study the curious accessories of the room; his eyes traveled over

the rafters in the ceiling, over the dingy panels covered with fly-spots in sufficient abundance to punctuate the whole of the "Encyclopédie méthodique" and the "Moniteur" besides. The loto players looked up at this and stared at him; if a giraffe had been in their midst they could hardly have gazed with more eager curiosity. Even M. des Grassins and his son, who had beheld a man of fashion before in the course of their lives, shared in the general amazement; perhaps they felt the indefinable influence of the general feeling about the stranger, perhaps they regarded him not unapprovingly. "You see how they dress in Paris," their satirical glances seemed to say to their neighbors.

One and all were at liberty to watch Charles at their leisure, without any fear of offending the master of the house, for by this time Grandet was deep in a long letter which he held in his hand. He had taken the only candle from the table beside him, without any regard for the convenience of his guests or for their pleasure.

It seemed to Eugénie, who had never in her life beheld such a paragon, that her cousin was some seraphic vision, some creature fallen from the skies. The perfume exhaled by those shining locks, so gracefully curled, was delightful to her. She would fain have passed her fingers over the delicate, smooth surface of those wonderful gloves. She envied Charles his little hands, his complexion, the youthful refinement of his features. In fact, the sight of her cousin gave her the same sensations of exquisite pleasure that might be aroused in a young man by the contemplation of the fanciful portraits of ladies in English "Keepsakes," portraits drawn by Westall and engraved by Finden, with a burin so skillful that you fear to breathe upon the vellum surface lest the celestial vision should disappear. And yet—how should the impression produced by a young exquisite upon an ignorant girl whose life was spent in darning stockings and mending her father's clothes, in the dirty wainscoted window embrasure whence, in

an hour, she saw scarcely one passer-by in the silent street, how should her dim impressions be conveyed by such an image as this?

Charles drew from his pocket a handkerchief embroidered by the great lady who was traveling in Scotland. It was a dainty piece of work wrought by love, in hours that were lost to love; Eugénie gazed at her cousin, and wondered, was he really going to use it? Charles' manners, his way of adjusting his eyeglass, his superciliousness, his affectations, his manifest contempt for the little box which had but lately given so much pleasure to the wealthy heiress, and which in his eyes seemed to be a very absurd piece of rubbish; everything, in short, which had given offense to the Cruchots and the Grassinistes pleased Eugénie so much that she lay awake for long that night thinking about this phœnix of a cousin.

Meanwhile the numbers were drawn but languidly, and very soon the loto came to an end altogether. Big Nanon came into the room and said aloud, "Madame, you will have to give me some sheets to make the gentleman's bed."

Mme. Grandet disappeared with Nanon, and Mme. des Grassins said in a low voice, "Let us keep our sous, and give up the game."

Each player took back his coin from the chipped saucer which held the stakes. Then there was a general stir, and a wheeling movement in the direction of the fire.

"Is the game over?" inquired Grandet, still reading his letter.

"Yes, yes," answered Mme. des Grassins, seating herself next to Charles.

Eugénie left the room to help her mother and Nanon, moved by a thought that came with the vague feeling that stirred her heart for the first time. If she had been questioned by a skillful confessor, she would have no doubt admitted that her thought was neither for Nanon nor for her mother, but that she was seized with a restless and urgent

desire to see that all was right in her cousin's room, to busy herself on her cousin's account, to see that nothing was forgotten, to think of everything he might require, and to make sure that it was there, to make certain that everything was as neat and pretty as might be. She alone, so Eugénie thought already, could enter into her cousin's ideas and understand his tastes.

As a matter of fact, she came just at the right moment. Her mother and Nanon were about to leave the room in the belief that it was all in readiness; Eugénie convinced them in a moment that everything was yet to do. She filled Nanon's head with these ideas: the sheets had not been aired, Nanon must bring the warming-pan, there were ashes, there was a fire downstairs. She herself covered the old table with a clean white cloth, and told Nanon to mind and be sure to change it every morning. There must be a good fire in the room; she overcame her mother's objections, she induced Nanon to put a good supply of firewood outside in the passage, and to say nothing about it to her father. She ran downstairs into the parlor, sought in one of the sideboards for an old japanned tray which had belonged to the late M. de la Bertellière, and from the same source she procured a hexagonal crystal glass, a little gilt spoon with almost all the gilding rubbed off, and an old slender-necked glass bottle with Cupids engraved upon it; these she deposited in triumph on a corner of the chimney-piece. More ideas had crowded up in her mind during that one quarter of an hour than in all the years since she had come into the world.

"Mamma," she began, "he will never be able to bear the smell of a tallow candle. Suppose that we buy a wax candle?"

She fled, lightly as a bird, to find her purse, and drew thence the five francs which she had received for the month's expenses.

"Here, Nanon, be quick."

"But what will your father say?"

This dreadful objection was raised by Mme. Grandet, when she saw her daughter with an old Sèvres china sugar-basin which Grandet had brought back with him from the château at Froidfond.

"And where is the sugar to come from?" she went on. "Are you mad?"

"Nanon can easily buy the sugar when she goes for the candle, mamma."

"But how about your father?"

"Is it a right thing that his nephew should not have a glass of *eau sucrée* (sugar and water) to drink if he happens to want it? Besides, he will not notice it."

"Your father always notices things," said Mme. Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated; she knew her master.

"Do go, Nanon; it is my birthday to-day, you know!"

Nanon burst out laughing in spite of herself at the first joke her young mistress had ever been known to make, and did her bidding.

While Eugénie and her mother were doing their best to adorn the room which M. Grandet had allotted to his nephew, Mme. des Grassins was bestowing her attention on Charles, and making abundant use of her eyes as she did so.

"You are very brave," she said, "to leave the pleasures of the capital in winter in order to come to stay in Saumur. But if you are not frightened away at first sight of us, you shall see that even here we can amuse ourselves." And she gave him a languishing glance, in true provincial style.

Women in the provinces are wont to affect a demure and staid demeanor, which gives a furtive and eager eloquence to their eyes, a peculiarity which may be noted in ecclesiastics, for whom every pleasure is stolen or forbidden. Charles was so thoroughly out of his element in this room, it was all so far removed from the great château and the splendid surround-

ings in which he had thought to find his uncle, that, on paying closer attention to Mme. des Grassins, she almost reminded him of Parisian faces half obliterated already by these strange, new impressions. He responded graciously to the advances which had been made to him, and naturally they fell into conversation.

Mme. des Grassins gradually lowered her voice to tones suited to the nature of her confidences. Both she and Charles Grandet felt a need of mutual confidence, of explanations and an understanding; so after a few minutes spent in coquettish chatter and jests that covered a serious purpose, the wily provincial dame felt free to converse without fear of being overheard, under cover of a conversation on the sale of the vintage, the one all-absorbing topic at that moment in Saumur.

"If you will honor us with a visit," she said, "you will certainly do us a pleasure; my husband and I shall be very glad to see you. Our salon is the only one in Saumur where you will meet both the wealthy merchant society and the noblesse. We ourselves belong in a manner to both; they do not mix with each other at all except at our house; they come to us because they find it amusing. My husband, I am proud to say, is very highly thought of in both circles. So we will do our best to beguile the tedium of your stay. If you are going to remain with the Grandets, what will become of you! *Bon Dieu!* Your uncle is a miser, his mind runs on nothing but his vine-cuttings; your aunt is a saint who cannot put two ideas together; and your cousin is a silly little thing, a common sort of girl, with no breeding and no money, who spends her life in mending dish-cloths."

"'Tis a very pretty woman," said Charles to himself; Mme. des Grassins' coquettish glances had not been thrown away upon him.

"It seems to me that you mean to monopolize the gentleman," said the big banker, laughing, to his wife, an unlucky

observation, followed by remarks more or less spiteful from the notary and the president; but the Abbé gave them a shrewd glance, took a pinch of snuff, and handed his snuff-box to the company, while he gave expression to their thoughts, "Where could the gentleman have found any one better qualified to do the honors of Saumur?" he said.

"Come, Abbé, what do you mean by that?" asked M. des Grassins.

"It is meant, sir, in the most flattering sense for you, for madame, for the town of Saumur, and for this gentleman," added the shrewd ecclesiastic, turning towards Charles. Without appearing to pay the slightest heed to their talk, he had managed to guess the drift of it.

Adolphe des Grassins spoke at last, with what was meant to be an off-hand manner. "I do not know," he said, addressing Charles, "whether you have any recollection of me; I once had the pleasure of dancing in the same quadrille at a ball given by M. le Baron de Nucingen, and——"

"I remember it perfectly," answered Charles, surprised to find himself the object of general attention.

"Is this gentleman your son?" he asked of Mme. des Grassins.

The Abbé gave her a spiteful glance.

"Yes, I am his mother," she answered.

"You must have been very young when you came to Paris?" Charles went on, speaking to Adolphe.

"We cannot help ourselves, sir," said the Abbé. "Our babes are scarcely weaned before we send them to Babylon."

Mme. des Grassins gave the Abbé a strangely penetrating glance; she seemed to be seeking the meaning of those words.

"You must go into the country," the Abbé went on, "if you want to find women not much on the other side of thirty, with a grown-up son a licentiate of law, who look as fresh and youthful as Mme. des Grassins. It only seems like the other day when the young men and the ladies stood on chairs to see

you dance, madame," the Abbé added, turning towards his fair antagonist; "your triumphs are as fresh in my memory as if they had happened yesterday."

"Oh! the old wretch!" said Mme. des Grassins to herself, "is it possible that he has guessed?"

"It looks as though I should have a great success in Saumur," thought Charles. He unbuttoned his overcoat and stood with his hands in his waistcoat pocket, gazing into space, striking the attitude which Chantrey thought fit to give to Byron in his statue of that poet.

Meanwhile Grandet's inattention, or rather his preoccupation, during the reading of his letter had escaped neither the notary nor the magistrate. Both of them tried to guess at the contents by watching the almost imperceptible changes in the worthy man's face, on which all the light of a candle was concentrated. The vine-grower was hard put to it to preserve his wonted composure. His expression must be left to the imagination, but here is the fatal letter:

"My Brother:—It is nearly twenty-three years now since we saw each other. The last time we met it was to make arrangements for my marriage, and we parted in high spirits. Little did I then think, when you were congratulating yourself on our prosperity, that one day you would be the sole hope and stay of our family. By the time that this letter reaches your hands, I shall be no more. In my position, I could not survive the disgrace of bankruptcy; I have held up my head above the surface till the last moment, hoping to weather the storm; it is all of no use, I must sink now. Just after the failure of my stockbroker came the failure of Roguin (my notary); my last resources have been swept away, and I have nothing left. It is my heavy misfortune to owe nearly four millions; my assets only amount to twenty-five per cent. of my debts. I hold heavy stocks of wine, and, owing to the abundance and good quality of your vintages, they have fallen

ruinously in value. In three days' time all Paris will say, 'M. Grandet was a rogue!' and I, honest though I am, shall lie wrapped in a winding sheet of infamy. I have despoiled my own son of his mother's fortune and of the spotless name on which I have brought disgrace. He knows nothing of all this—the unhappy child whom I have idolized. Happily for him, he did not know when we bade each other good-bye, and my heart overflowed with tenderness for him, how soon it should cease to beat. Will he not curse me some day? Oh! my brother, my brother, a child's curse is an awful thing! If we curse our children, they may appeal against us, but their curses cling to us for ever! Grandet, you are my older brother, you must shield me from this; do not let Charles say bitter things of me when I am lying in my grave. Oh! my brother, if every word in this letter were written in my tears, in my blood, it would not cost me such bitter anguish, for then I should be weeping, bleeding, dying, and the agony would be ended; but now I am still suffering—I see the death before me with dry eyes. You therefore are Charles' father now! He has no relations on his mother's side for reasons which you know. Why did I not defer to social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry the natural daughter of a noble? Charles is the last of his family; he is alone in the world. Oh! my unhappy boy, my son!—— Listen, Grandet, I am asking nothing for myself, and you could scarcely satisfy my creditors if you would; your fortune cannot be sufficient to meet a demand of three millions; it is for my son's sake that I write. You must know, my brother, that as I think of you my petition is made with clasped hands; that this is my dying prayer to you. Grandet, I know that you will be a father to him; I know that I shall not ask in vain, and the sight of my pistols does not cause me a pang.

"And then Charles is very fond of me; I was kind to him, I never said him nay; he will not curse me! For the rest,

you will see how sweet-tempered and obedient he is; he takes after his mother; he will never give you any trouble, poor boy! He is accustomed to luxurious ways; he knows nothing of the hardships that you and I experienced in the early days when we were poor—— And now he has not a penny, and he is alone in the world, for all his friends are sure to leave him, and it is I who have brought these humiliations upon him. Ah! if I had only the power to send him straight to heaven now, where his mother is! This is madness! To go back to my misfortunes and Charles' share in them. I have sent him to you so that you may break the news of my death and explain to him what his future must be. Be a father to him; ah! more than that, be an indulgent father! Do not expect him to give up his idle ways all at once; it would kill him. On my knees I beg him to renounce all claims to his mother's fortune; but I need not ask that of him, his sense of honor will prevent him from adding himself to the list of my creditors; see that he resigns his claims when the right time comes. And you must lay everything before him, Grandet—the struggle and the hardships that he will have to face in the life that I have spoiled for him; and then if he has any tenderness still left for me, tell him from me that all is not lost for him—be sure you tell him that. Work, which was our salvation, can restore the fortune which I have lost; and if he will listen to his father's voice, which would fain make itself heard yet a little while from the grave, let him leave this country and go to the Indies! And, brother, Charles is honest and energetic; you will help him with his first trading venture, I know you will; he would die sooner than not repay you; you will do as much as that for him, Grandet, or you will lay up regrets for yourself. Ah! if my boy finds no kindness and no help in you, I shall for ever pray God to punish your hard-heartedness. If I could have withheld a few payments, I might have saved a little sum for him—he surely has a right to some of his mother's fortune—but the payments

at the end of the month taxed all my resources, and I could not manage it. I would fain have died with my mind at rest about his future; I wish I could have received your solemn promise, coming straight from your hand it would have brought warmth with it for me; but time presses. Even while Charles is on his way, I am compelled to file my schedule. My affairs are all in order; I am endeavoring so to arrange everything that it will be evident that my failure is due neither to carelessness nor to dishonesty, but simply to disasters which I could not help. Is it not for Charles' sake that I take these pains? Farewell, my brother. May God bless you in every way for the generosity with which you (as I cannot doubt) will accept and fulfill this trust. There will be one voice that will never cease to pray for you in the world whither we must all go sooner or later, and where I am even now.

"VICTOR-ANGE-GUILLAUME GRANDET."

"So you are having a chat?" said old Grandet, folding up the letter carefully in the original creases, and putting it into his waistcoat pocket.

He looked at his nephew in a shy and embarrassed way, seeking to dissemble his feelings and his calculations.

"Do you feel warmer?"

"I am very comfortable, my dear uncle."

"Well, whatever are the women after?" his uncle went on; the fact that his nephew would sleep in the house had by that time slipped from his memory. Eugénie and Mme. Grandet came into the room as he spoke.

"Is everything ready upstairs?" the good man inquired. He had now quite recovered himself, and recollected the facts of the case.

"Yes, father."

"Very well then, nephew, if you are feeling tired, Nanon will show you to your room. Lord! there is nothing very smart about it, but you will overlook that here among poor

vine-growers, who never have a penny to bless themselves with. The taxes swallow up everything we have."

"We don't want to be intrusive, Grandet," said the banker. "You and your nephew may have some things to talk over; we will wish you good-evening. Good-bye till to-morrow."

Every one rose at this, and took leave after their several fashions. The old notary went out under the archway to look for his lantern, lighted it, and offered to see the des Grassins to their house. Mme. des Grassins had not been prepared for the event which had brought the evening so early to a close, and her maid had not appeared.

"Will you honor me by taking my arm, madame?" said the Abbé Cruchot, addressing Mme. des Grassins.

"Thank you, M. l'Abbé," said the lady drily; "my son is with me."

"I am not a compromising acquaintance for a lady," the Abbé continued.

"Take M. Cruchot's arm," said her husband.

The Abbé, with the fair lady on his arm, walked on quickly for several paces, so as to put a distance between them and the rest of the party.

"That young man is very good-looking, madame," he said, with a pressure on her arm to give emphasis to the remark. "'Tis good-bye to the baskets, the vintage is over! You must give up Mlle. Grandet; Eugénie is meant for her cousin. Unless he happens to be smitten with some fair face in Paris, your son Adolphe will have yet another rival——"

"Nonsense, M. l'Abbé."

"It will not be long before the young man will find out that Eugénie is a girl who has nothing to say for herself; and she has gone off in looks. Did you notice her? She was as yellow as a quince this evening."

"Which, possibly, you have already pointed out to her cousin?"

"Indeed, I have not taken the trouble——"

"If you always sit beside Eugénie, madame," interrupted the Abbé, "you will not need to tell the young man much about his cousin; he can make his own comparisons."

"He promised me at once to come to dine with us the day after to-morrow."

"Ah! madame," said the Abbé, "if you would only——"

"Would only what, M. l'Abbé? Do you mean to put evil suggestions into my mind? I have not come to the age of thirty-nine with a spotless reputation (heaven be thanked) to compromise myself now—not for the empire of the Great Mogul! We are both of us old enough to know what that kind of talk means; and I must say that your ideas do not square very well with your sacred calling. For shame! this is worthy of 'Faublas.'"

"So you have read 'Faublas?'"

"No, M. l'Abbé; 'Les Liaisons dangereuses' (dangerous entanglements) is what I meant to say."

"Oh! that book is infinitely more moral," said the Abbé, laughing. "But you would make me out to be as depraved as young men are nowadays. I only meant that you——"

"Do you dare to tell me that you meant no harm? The thing is plain enough. If that young fellow (who certainly is good-looking, that I grant you) paid court to me, it would not be for the sake of my interest with that cousin of his. In Paris, I know, there are tender mothers who sacrifice themselves thus for their children's happiness and welfare, but we are not in Paris, M. l'Abbé."

"No, madame."

"And," continued she, "neither Adolphe nor I would purchase a hundred millions at such a price."

"Madame, I said nothing about a hundred millions. Perhaps such a temptation might have been too much for either of us. Still, in my opinion, an honest woman may indulge in a little harmless coquetry, in the strictest propriety; it is a part of her social duties, and——"

"Do you think so?"

"Do we not owe it to ourselves, madame, to endeavor to be as agreeable as possible to others?——Permit me to blow my nose. Take my word for it, madame," resumed the Abbé, "that he certainly regarded you with rather more admiration than he saw fit to bestow on me, but I can forgive him for honoring beauty rather than gray hairs——"

"It is perfectly clear," said the president in his thick voice, "why M. Grandet of Paris is sending his son to Saumur; he has made up his mind to make a match——"

"Then why should the cousin have dropped from the skies like this?" answered the notary.

"There is nothing in that," remarked M. des Grassins, "old Grandet is so close."

"Des Grassins," said his wife, "I have asked that young man to come and dine with us. So you must go to M. and Mme. de Larsonnière, dear, and ask them to come, and the du Hautoys; and they must bring that pretty girl of theirs, of course; I hope she will dress herself properly for once. Her mother is jealous of her, and makes her look such a figure. I hope that you gentlemen will do us the honor of coming too?" she added, stopping the procession in order to turn to the two Cruchots, who, seeing the Abbé in conversation with Mme. des Grassins, had fallen behind.

"Here we are at your door, madame," said the notary. The three Cruchots took leave of the three des Grassins, and on their way home the talent for pulling each other to pieces, which provincials possess in perfection, was fully called into play; the great event of the evening was exhaustively discussed, and all its bearings upon the respective positions of Cruchotins and Grassinistes were duly considered. Clearly it behooved both alike to prevent Eugénie from falling in love with her cousin, and to hinder Charles from thinking of Eugénie. Sly hints, plausible insinuations, faint praise, vindications undertaken with an air of candid friendliness—what

resistance could the Parisian offer when the air hurtled with deceptive weapons such as these?

As soon as the four relatives were left alone in the great room, M. Grandet spoke to his nephew.

"We must go to bed. It is too late to begin to talk to-night of the business that brought you here; to-morrow will be time enough for that. We have breakfast here at eight o'clock. At noon we take a snatch of something, a little fruit, a morsel of bread, and a glass of white wine, and, like Parisians, we dine at five o'clock. That is the way of it. If you care to take a look at the town, or to go into the country round about, you are quite free to do so. You will excuse me if, for business reasons, I cannot always accompany you. Very likely you will be told hereabouts that I am rich; 'tis always M. Grandet here and M. Grandet there. I let them talk. Their babble does not injure my credit in any way. But I have not a penny to bless myself with; and, old as I am, I work like any young journeyman who has nothing in the world but his plane and a pair of stout arms. Perhaps you will find out for yourself some of these days what a lot of work it takes to earn a crown when you have to toil and moil for it yourself. Here, Nanon, bring the candles."

"I hope you will find everything you want, nephew," said Mme. Grandet; "but if anything has been forgotten, you will call Nanon."

"It would be difficult to want anything, my dear aunt, for I believe I have brought all my things with me. Permit me to wish you and my young cousin good-night."

Charles took a lighted wax-candle from Nanon; it was a commodity of local manufacture, which had grown old in the shop, very dingy, very yellow, and so like the ordinary tallow variety that M. Grandet had no suspicion of the article of luxury before him; indeed, it never entered into his head to imagine that there could be such a thing in the house.

"I will show you the way," said the good man.

One of the doors in the dining-room gave immediate access to the archway and to the staircase; but to-night, out of compliment to his guest, Grandet went by way of the passage which separated the kitchen from the dining-room. A folding-door, with a large oval pane of glass let into it, closed in the passage at the end nearest the staircase, an arrangement intended to keep out the blasts of cold air that rushed through the archway. With a like end in view, strips of list had been nailed to the doors; but in winter the east wind found its way in, and whistled none the less shrewdly about the house, and the dining-room was seldom even tolerably warm.

Nanon went out, drew the bolts on the entrance gate, fastened the door of the dining-room, went across to the stable to let loose a great wolf-dog with a cracked voice; it sounded as though the animal was suffering from laryngitis. His savage temper was well known, and Nanon was the only human being who could manage him. There was some wild strain in both these children of the fields; they understood each other.

Charles glanced round at the dingy yellow walls and smoke-begrimed ceiling, and saw how the crazy, worm-eaten stairs shook beneath his uncle's heavy tread; he was fast coming to his senses, this was sober reality indeed! The place looked like a hen-roost. He looked round questioningly at the faces of his aunt and cousin, but they were so thoroughly accustomed to the staircase and its peculiarities that it never occurred to them that it could cause any astonishment; they took his signal of distress for a simple expression of friendliness, and smiled back at him in the most amiable way. That smile was the last straw; the young man was at his wits' end.

"What the devil made my father send me here?" said he to himself.

Arrived on the first landing, he saw before him three doors

painted a dull red-brown color; there were no mouldings round any of them, so that they would have been scarcely visible in the dusty surface of the wall if it had not been for the very apparent heavy bars of iron with which they were embellished, and which terminated in a sort of rough ornamental design, as did the ends of the iron scutcheons which surrounded the keyholes. A door at the head of the stairs, which had once given entrance into the room over the kitchen, was evidently blocked up. As a matter of fact, the only entrance was through Grandet's own room, and this room over the kitchen was the vine-grower's sanctum.

Daylight was admitted into it by a single window which looked out upon the yard, and which, for greater security, was protected by a grating of massive iron bars. The master of the house allowed no one, not even Mme. Grandet, to set foot in this chamber; he kept the right of entry to himself, and sat there, undisturbed and alone, like an alchemist in the midst of his crucibles. Here, no doubt, there was some cunningly-contrived and secret hiding-place; for here he stored up the title-deeds of his estates; here, too, he kept the delicately-adjusted scales in which he weighed his gold louis; and here every night he made out receipts, wrote acknowledgments of sums received, and laid his schemes, so that other business men seeing Grandet never busy, and always prepared for every emergency, might have been excused for imagining that he had a fairy or familiar spirit at his beck and call. Here, no doubt, when Nanon's snoring shook the rafters, when the savage watch-dog bayed and prowled about the yard, when Mme. Grandet and Eugénie were fast asleep, the old cooper would come to be with his gold, and hug himself upon it, and toy with it, and fondle it, and brood over it, and so, with the intoxication of the gold upon him, at last to sleep. The walls were thick, the closed shutters kept their secret. He alone had the key of this laboratory, where, if reports spoke truly, he pored over plans on which every fruit tree

belonging to him was mapped out, so that he could reckon out his crops, so much to every vine stem ; and his yield of timber, to a faggot.

The door of Eugénie's room was opposite this closed-up portal, the room occupied by M. and Mme. Grandet was at the end of the landing, and consisted of the entire front of the house. It was divided within by a partition, Mme. Grandet's chamber was next to Eugénie's, with which it communicated by a glass door ; the other half of the room, separated from the mysterious cabinet by a thick wall, belonged to the master of the house. Goodman Grandet had cunningly lodged his nephew on the second story, in an airy garret immediately above his own room, so that he could hear every sound and inform himself of the young man's goings and comings, if the latter should take it into his head to leave his quarters.

Eugénie and her mother, arrived on the first landing, kissed each other and said good-night ; they took leave of Charles in a few formal words, spoken with an apparent indifference, which in her heart the girl was far from feeling, and went to their rooms.

"This is your room, nephew," said Grandet, addressing Charles as he opened the door. "If you should wish to go out, you will have to call Nanon ; for if you don't it will be 'no more at present from your most obedient,' the dog will gobble you down before you know where you are. Good-night, sleep well. Ha ! ha ! the ladies have lighted a fire in your room," he went on.

Just at that moment big Nanon appeared, armed with a warming-pan.

"Did any one ever see the like ?" said M. Grandet. "Do you take my nephew for a sick woman ; he is not an invalid. Just be off, Nanon ! you and your hot ashes."

"But the sheets are damp, sir, and the gentleman looks as delicate as a woman."

"All right, go through with it, since you have taken it into your head," said Grandet, shrugging his shoulders, "but mind you don't set the place on fire," and the miser groped his way downstairs, muttering vaguely to himself.

Charles, breathless with astonishment, was left among his trunks. He looked round about him, at the sloping roof of the attic, at the wall-paper of a pattern peculiar to little country inns, bunches of flowers symmetrically arranged on a buff-colored background; he looked at the rough stone chimney-piece full of rifts and cracks (the mere sight of it sent a chill through him, in spite of the fire in the grate), at the ramshackle cane-seat chairs, at the open night-table large enough to hold a fair-sized sergeant-at-arms, at the strip of worn rag-carpet beside the canopied bedstead, at the curtains which shook every moment as if the whole worm-eaten structure would fall to pieces; finally, he turned his attention to big Nanon, and said earnestly—

"Look here, my good girl, am I really in M. Grandet's house? M. Grandet, formerly mayor of Saumur, and brother of M. Grandet of Paris?"

"Yes, sir, you are; and you are staying with a very kind, a very amiable and excellent gentleman. Am I to help you to unpack those trunks of yours?"

"Faith, yes, old soldier, I wish you would. Did you serve in the horse marines?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" chuckled Nanon. "What may they be? What are the horse marines? Are they old salts? Do they go to sea?"

"Here, look out my dressing-gown; it is in that portmanteau, and this is the key."

Nanon was overcome with astonishment at the sight of a green silk dressing-gown, embroidered with gold flowers after an antique pattern.

"Are you going to sleep in *that?*" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Holy Virgin! What a beautiful altar cloth it would make for the parish church! Oh, my dear young gentleman, you should give it to the church, and you will save your soul, which you are like to lose for that thing. Oh! how nice you look in it. I will go and call mademoiselle to look at you."

"Come now, Nanon, since that is your name, will you hold your tongue, and let me go to bed. I will set my things straight to-morrow, and as you have taken such a fancy to my gown, you shall have a chance to save your soul. I am too good a Christian to take it away with me when I go; you shall have it, and you can do whatever you like with it."

Nanon stood stockstill, staring at Charles; she could not bring herself to believe that he really meant what he said.

"You are going to give that grand dressing-gown to *me!*" she said, as she turned to go. "The gentleman is dreaming already. Good-night."

"Good-night, Nanon. What anyhow am I doing here?" said Charles to himself, as he dropped off to sleep. "My father is no fool; I have not been sent here for nothing. Pooh! 'Serious business to-morrow,' as some old Greek wiseacre used to say."

"*Sainte Vierge!* how nice he is!" said Eugénie to herself in the middle of her prayers, and that night they remained unfinished.

Mme. Grandet alone lay down to rest, with no thought in her quiet mind. Through the door in the thin partition she could hear her husband pacing to and fro in his room. Like all sensitive and timid women, she had thoroughly studied the character of her lord and master. Just as the sea-mew foresees the coming storm, she knew by almost imperceptible signs that a tempest was raging in Grandet's mind, and, to use her own expression, she "lay like one dead" at such seasons. Grandet's eyes turned towards his sanctum; he looked at the door, which was lined with sheet iron on the

inner side (he himself had seen to that), and muttered, "What a preposterous notion this is of my brother's, to leave his child to me! A pretty legacy! I haven't twenty crowns to spare, and what would twenty crowns be to a popinjay like that, who looked at my weather-glass as if it wasn't fit to light the fire with?"

And Grandet, meditating on the probable outcome of this mournful dying request, was perhaps more perturbed in spirit than the brother who had made it.

"Shall I really have that golden gown?" Nanon said, and she fell asleep wrapped round in her altar cloth, dreaming for the first time in her life of shining embroideries and flowered brocade, just as Eugénie dreamed of love.

In a girl's innocent and uneventful life there comes a mysterious hour of joy when the sunlight spreads through the soul, and it seems to her that the flowers express the thoughts that rise within her, thoughts that are quickened by every heart-beat, only to blend in a vague feeling of longing, when the days are filled with innocent melancholy and delicious happiness. Children smile when they see the light for the first time, and when a girl dimly divines the presence of love in the world she smiles as she smiled in her babyhood. If light is the first thing that we learn to love, is not love like light in the heart? This moment had come for Eugénie; she saw the things of life clearly for the first time.

Early rising is the rule in the country, so, like most other girls, Eugénie was up betimes in the morning; this morning she rose earlier than usual, said her prayers, and began to dress; her toilet was henceforth to possess an interest unknown before. She began by brushing her chestnut hair, and wound the heavy plaits about her head, careful that no loose ends should escape from the braided coronet which made an appropriate setting for a face both frank and shy, a simple coiffure which harmonized with the girlish outlines.

As she washed her hands again and again in the cold spring

water that roughened and reddened the skin, she looked down at her pretty rounded arms and wondered what her cousin did to have hands so soft and so white, and nails so shapely. She put on a pair of new stockings, and her best shoes, and laced herself carefully, without passing over a single eyelet-hole. For the first time in her life, in fact, she wished to look her best, and felt that it was pleasant to have a pretty new dress to wear, a becoming dress which was nicely made.

The church clock struck just as she had finished dressing; she counted the strokes, and was surprised to find that it was still only seven o'clock. She had been so anxious to have plenty of time for her toilet that she had risen too early, and now there was nothing left to do. Eugénie, in her ignorance, never thought of studying the position of a tress of hair, and of altering it a dozen times to criticise its effect; she simply folded her arms, sat down by the window, and looked out upon the yard, the long strip of garden, and the terraced gardens up above upon the ramparts.

It was a somewhat dreary outlook thus shut in by the grim rock walls, but not without a charm of its own, the mysterious beauty of quiet overshaded gardens, or of wild and solitary places. Under the kitchen window there was a well with a stone coping round it; a pulley was suspended above the water from an iron bracket overgrown by a vine; the vine leaves were red and faded now that the autumn was nearly at an end, and the crooked stem was plainly visible as it wound its way to the house wall, and crept along the house till it came to an end by the wood-stack, where the faggots were arranged with as much neatness and precision as the volumes on some book-lover's shelves. The flagstones in the yard were dark with age and mosses, and dank with the stagnant air of the place; weeds grew here and there among the chinks. The massive outworks of the old fortifications were green with moss, with here and there a long dark brown streak where the water dripped, and the eight tumble-down steps, which gave access

to the garden at the farther end of the yard, were almost hidden by a tall growth of plants; the general effect of the crumbling stones had a vague resemblance to some crusader's tomb erected by his widow in the days of yore and long since fallen into ruin.

Along the low mouldering stone-wall there was a fence of open lattice-work, rotten with age, and fast falling to pieces; overrun by various creeping plants that clambered over it at their own sweet will. A couple of stunted apple trees spread out their gnarled and twisted branches on either side of the wicket gate that led into the garden—three straight gravel walks with strips of border in between, and a line of box-edging on either side; and at the farther end, underneath the ramparts, a sort of arbor of lime trees, and a row of raspberry canes. A huge walnut tree grew at the end nearest to the house, and almost overshadowed the cooper's strong room with its spreading branches.

It was one of those soft bright autumn mornings peculiar to the districts along the Loire; there was not a trace of mist; the light frosty rime of the previous night was rapidly disappearing as the mild rays of the autumn sun shone on the picturesque surroundings, the old walls, the green tangled growth in the yard and garden.

All these things had been long familiar to Eugénie's eyes, but to-day it seemed to her that there was a new beauty about them. A throng of confused thoughts filled her mind as the sunbeams overflowed the world without. A vague, inexplicable new happiness stirred within her, and enveloped her soul, as a bright cloud might cling about some object in the material world. The quaint garden, the old walls, every detail in her little world seemed to be living through this new experience with her; the nature without her was in harmony with her inmost thoughts. The sunlight crept along the wall till it reached a maiden-hair fern; the changing hues of a pigeon's breast shone from the thick fronds and glossy stems, and all

Eugénie's future grew bright with radiant hopes. Henceforward the bit of wall, its pale flowers, its blue harebells and bleached grasses, was a pleasant sight for her; it called up associations which had all the charm of the memories of childhood.

The rustling sound made by the leaves as they fell to the earth, the echoes that came up from the court, seemed like answers to the girl's secret questionings as she sat and mused; she might have stayed there by the window all day and never have noticed how the hours went by, but other thoughts surged up within her soul. Again and again she rose and stood before the glass, and looked at herself, as a conscientious writer scrutinizes his work, criticises it, and says hard things about it to himself.

"I am not pretty enough for him!"

This was what Eugénie thought, in her humility, and the thought was fertile in suffering. The poor child did not do herself justice; but humility, or, more truly, fear, is born with love. Eugénie's beauty was of a robust type often found among the lower middle classes, a type which may seem somewhat wanting in refinement, but in her the beauty of the Venus of Milo was ennobled and purified by the beauty of Christian sentiment, which invests woman with a dignity unknown to ancient sculptors. Her head was very large; the masculine but delicate outlines of her forehead recalled the Jupiter of Phidias; all the radiance of her pure life seemed to shine from the clear gray eyes. An attack of smallpox, so mild that it had left no scars on the oval face or features, had yet somewhat blurred their fresh fair coloring, and coarsened the smooth and delicate surface, still so fine and soft that her mother's gentle kiss left a passing trace of faint red on her cheek. Perhaps her nose was a little too large, but it did not contradict the kindly and affectionate expression of the mouth, and the red lips covered with finely-etched lines. Her throat was daintily rounded. There was something that attracted

attention and stirred the imagination in the curving lines of her figure, covered to the throat by her high-necked dress; no doubt she possessed little of the grace that is due to the toilet, and her tall frame was strong rather than lissome, but this was not without its charm for judges of beauty.

For Eugénie was both tall and strongly built. She had nothing of the prettiness that ordinary people admire; but her beauty was unmistakable, and of a kind in which artists alone delight. A painter in quest of an exalted and spiritual type, searching women's faces for the beauty which Raphael dreamed of and conjured into being, the eyes full of proud humility, the pure outlines, often due to some chance inspiration of the artist, but which a virtuous and Christian life can alone acquire or preserve—a painter haunted by this ideal would have seen at once in Eugénie Grandet's face her unconscious and innate nobility of soul, a world of love behind the quiet brow, and in the way she had with her eyelids and in her eyes that divine something which baffles description. There was a serene tranquillity about her features, unspoiled and unwearied by the expression of pleasure; it was as if you watched, across some placid lake, the shadowy outlines of hills far off against the sky. The beauty of Eugénie's face, so quiet and so softly colored, was like that of some fair, half-opened flower about which the light seems to hover; in its quality of restfulness, its subtle revelation of a beautiful nature, lay the charm that attracted beholders. Eugénie was still on the daisied brink of life, where illusions blossom and joys are gathered which are not known in later days. So she looked in the glass, and with no thought of love as yet in her mind, she said, "He will not give me a thought; I am too ugly!"

Then she opened her door, went out on to the landing, and bent over the staircase to hear the sounds in the house.

"He is not getting up yet," she thought. She heard Nanon's morning cough as the good woman went to and fro, swept out

the dining-room, lit the kitchen fire, chained up the dog, and talked to her friends the brutes in the stable.

Eugénie fled down the staircase, and ran over to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

"Nanon," she cried, "do let us have some cream for my cousin's coffee, there's a dear."

"But, mademoiselle, you can't have cream off this morning's milk," said Nanon, as she burst out laughing. "I can't make cream for you. Your cousin is as charming as charming can be, that he is! You haven't seen him in that silk night rail of his, all flowers and gold! I did though! The linen he wears is every bit as fine as M. le Curé's surplice."

"Nanon, make some cake for us."

"And who is to find the wood to heat the oven and the flour and the butter?" asked Nanon, who in her capacity of Grandet's prime minister was a person of immense importance in Eugénie's eyes, and even in Eugénie's mother's. "Is *he* to be robbed to make a feast for your cousin? Ask for the butter and the flour and the firewood; he is your father, go and ask him, he may give them to *you*. There! there he is, just coming downstairs to see after the provisions——"

But Eugénie had escaped into the garden; the sound of her father's footstep on the creaking staircase terrified her. She was conscious of a happiness that shrank from the observation of others, a happiness which, as we are apt to think, and perhaps not without reason, shines from our eyes, and is written at large upon our foreheads. And not only so, she was conscious of other thoughts. The bleak discomfort of her father's house had struck her for the first time, and, with a dim feeling of vexation, the poor child wished that she could alter it all, and bring it more into harmony with her cousin's elegance. She felt a passionate longing to do something for him, without the slightest idea what that something should be. The womanly instinct awakened in her at the first sight of her cousin was only the stronger because she had reached her three-and-

twentieth year, and mind and heart were fully developed; and she was so natural and simple that she acted on the promptings of her angelic nature without submitting herself, her impressions, or her feelings to any introspective process.

For the first time in her life the sight of her father struck a sort of terror into her heart; she felt that he was the master of her fate, and that she was guiltily hiding some of her thoughts from him. She began to walk hurriedly up and down, wondering how it was that the air was so fresh; there was a reviving force in the sunlight, it seemed to be within her as well as without, it was as if a new life had begun.

While she was still thinking how to gain her end concerning the cake, a quarrel came to pass between Nanon and Grandet, a thing as rare as a winter swallow. The good man had just taken his keys, and was about to dole out the provisions required for the day.

"Is there any bread left over from yesterday!" he asked of Nanon.

"Not a crumb, sir."

Grandet took up a large loaf, round in form and close in consistence, shaped in one of the flat baskets which they use for baking in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon broke in upon him with—

"There are five of us to-day, sir."

"True," answered Grandet; "but these loaves of yours weigh six pounds apiece; there will be some left over. Besides, these young fellows from Paris never touch bread, as you will soon see."

"Then do they eat *kitchen?*" asked Nanon.

This word *kitchen* in the Angevin dictionary signifies anything which is spread upon bread; from butter, the commonest variety, to preserved peaches, the most distinguished of all *kitchens;* and those who, as small children, have nibbled off the *kitchen* and left the bread, will readily understand the bearing of Nanon's remark.

"No," replied Grandet, with much gravity, "they eat neither bread nor *kitchen;* they are like a girl in love, as you may say."

Having at length cut down the day's rations to the lowest possible point, the miser was about to go to his fruit-loft, first carefully locking up the cupboards of his storeroom, when Nanon stopped him.

"Just give me some flour and butter, sir," she said, "and I will make a cake for the children."

"Are you going to turn the house upside down because my nephew is here?"

"Your nephew was no more in my mind than your dog, no more than he was in yours—— There now! you have only put out six lumps of sugar, and I want eight."

"Come, come, Nanon; I have never seen you like this before. What has come over you? Are you mistress here? You will have six lumps of sugar and no more."

"Oh, very well; and what is your nephew to sweeten his coffee with?"

"He can have two lumps; I shall go without it myself."

"*You* go without sugar! and at your age! I would sooner pay for it out of my own pocket."

"Mind your own business."

In spite of the low price of sugar, it was, in Grandet's eyes, the most precious of all colonial products. For him it was always something to be used sparingly; it was still worth six francs a pound, as in the time of the Empire, and this pet economy had become an inveterate habit with him. But every woman, no matter how simple she may be, can devise some shift to gain her ends; and Nanon allowed the question of the sugar to drop, in order to have her way about the cake.

"Mademoiselle," she called through the window, "wouldn't you like some cake?"

"No, no," answered Eugénie.

"Stay, Nanon," said Grandet as he heard his daughter's voice; "there!"

He opened the flour-bin, measured out some flour, and added a few ounces of butter to the piece which he had already cut.

"And firewood; I shall want firewood to heat the oven," said the inexorable Nanon.

"Ah! well, you can take what you want," he answered ruefully; but you will make a fruit tart at the same time, and you must bake the dinner in the oven, that will save lighting another fire."

"Why!" cried Nanon; "there is no need to tell me that!"

Grandet gave his trusty prime minister a glance that was almost paternal.

"Mademoiselle," cried Nanon, "we are going to have a cake."

Grandet came back again with the fruit, and began by setting down a plateful on the kitchen table.

"Just look here, sir," said Nanon, "what lovely boots your nephew has! What leather, how nice it smells! What are they to be cleaned with? Am I to put your egg blacking on them?"

"No, Nanon," said Eugénie; "I expect the egg would spoil the leather. You had better tell him that you have no idea how to clean black morocco—— Yes, it is morocco, and he himself will buy you something in Saumur to clean his boots with. I have heard it said that they put sugar into their blacking, and that is what makes it so shiny."

"Then is it good to eat?" asked Nanon, as she picked up the boots and smelt them. "Why, why! they smell of madame's eau-de-Cologne! Oh, how funny!"

"*Funny!*" said her master; "people spend more money on their boots than they are worth that stand in them, and you think it funny!" He had just returned from a second

and final expedition to the fruit-loft, carefully locking the door after him.

"You will have soup once or twice a week while your nephew is here, sir, will you not?"

"Yes."

"Shall I go round to the butcher's?"

"You will do nothing of the kind. You can make some chicken-broth; the tenants will keep you going. But I shall tell Cornoiller to kill some ravens for me. That kind of game makes the best broth in the world."

"Is it true, sir, that they live on dead things?"

"You are a fool, Nanon! They live, like everybody else, on anything that they can pick up. Don't we all live on dead things? What about legacies?" And the good man Grandet, having no further order to give, drew out his watch, and finding that there was yet half an hour to spare before breakfast, took up his hat, gave his daughter a kiss, and said, "Would you like to take a walk along the Loire? I have something to see after in the meadows down there."

Eugénie put on her straw hat lined with rose-colored silk; and then father and daughter went down the crooked street towards the market-place.

"Where are you off to so early this morning?" said the notary Cruchot, as he met the Grandets.

"We are going to take a look at something," responded his friend, in nowise deceived by this early move on the notary's part.

Whenever Grandet was about to "take a look at something," the notary knew by experience that there was something to be gained by going with him. With him, therefore, he went.

"Come along, Cruchot," said Grandet, addressing the notary. "You are one of my friends; I am going to show you what a piece of folly it is to plant poplars in good soil——"

"Then the sixty thousand francs that you fingered for those poplars of yours in the meadows by the Loire are a mere trifle to you?" said Cruchot, opening his eyes wide in his bewilderment. "And such luck as you had too! —— Felling your timber just when there was no white wood to be had in Nantes, so that every trunk fetched thirty francs!"

Eugénie heard and did not hear, utterly unconscious that the most critical moment of her life was rapidly approaching, that a paternal and sovereign decree was about to be pronounced, and that the old notary was to bring all this about. Grandet had reached the magnificent meadow-land by the Loire, which had come into his hands in his Republican days. Some thirty laborers were busy digging out the roots of the poplars that once stood there, filling up the holes that were left, and leveling the ground.

"Now, M. Cruchot, see how much space a poplar takes up," said he, addressing the notary. "Jean," he called to a workman, "m—m—measure r—round the sides with your rule."

"Eight feet four times over," said the workman when he had finished.

"Thirty-two feet of loss," said Grandet to Cruchot. "Now along that line there were three hundred poplars, weren't there? Well, then, three hundred t—t—times thirty-two f—feet will eat up five hundredweight of hay, allow twice as much again for the space on either side, and you get fifteen hundredweight; then there is the intervening space—say a thousand t—t—trusses of hay altogether."

"Well," said Cruchot, helping his friend out, "and a thousand trusses of that hay would fetch something like six hundred francs."

"S—s—say t—twelve hundred, because the s—second crop is worth three or four hundred francs. Good, then reckon up what t—t—twelve hundred francs per annum d—d—during f—forty years comes to, at compound interest, of course."

"Sixty thousand francs, or thereabouts," said the notary.

"That is what I make it! Sixty thousand f—f—francs. Well," the vine-grower went on without stammering, "two thousand poplars will not bring in fifty thousand francs in forty years. So you lose on them. That *I* found out," said Grandet, who was vastly pleased with himself. "Jean," he continued, turning to the laborer, "fill up all the holes except those along the riverside, where you can plant those poplar saplings that I bought. If you set them along by the Loire, they will grow there finely at the expense of the government," he added, and as he looked round at Cruchot the wen on his nose twitched slightly, the most sardonic smile could not have said more.

"Yes, it is clear enough, poplars should only be planted in poor soil," said Cruchot, quite overcome with amazement at Grandet's astuteness.

"Y—e—s, sir," said the cooper ironically.

Eugénie was looking out over the glorious landscape and along the Loire, without heeding her father's arithmetic; but Cruchot's talk with his client took another turn, and her attention was suddenly aroused.

"So you have a son-in-law come from Paris; they are talking about nothing but your nephew in all Saumur. I shall soon have settlements to draw up; eh, père Grandet?"

"Did you come out early to t—t—tell me that?" inquired Grandet, and again the wen twitched. "Very well, you are an old crony of mine; I will be p—plain with you, and t—t—tell you what you w—want to know. I would rather fling my d—d—daughter into the Loire, look you, than g—give her to her cousin. You can give that out. But, no; l—l—let people gossip."

Everything swam before Eugénie's eyes. Her vague hopes of distant happiness had suddenly taken definite shape, had sprung up and blossomed, and then her harvest of flowers had been as suddenly cut down and lay on the earth. Since

yesterday she had woven the bonds of happiness that unite two souls, and henceforward sorrow, it seemed, was to strengthen them. Is it not written in the noble destiny of woman that the grandeur of sorrow should touch her more closely than all the pomp and splendor of fortune?

How came it that a father's feelings had been extinguished (as it seemed) in her father's heart? What crime could be laid at Charles' door? Mysterious questions! Mysterious and sad forebodings already surrounded her growing love, that mystery within her soul. When they turned to go home again, she trembled in every limb; and as they went up the shady street, along which she had lately gone so joyously, the shadows looked gloomy, the air she breathed seemed full of the melancholy of autumn, everything about her was sad. Love, that had brought these keener perceptions, was quick to interpret every boding sign. As they neared home, she walked on ahead of her father, knocked at the house-door, and stood waiting beside it. But Grandet, seeing that the notary carried a newspaper still in its wrapper, asked, "How are consols?"

"I know you will not take my advice, Grandet," Cruchot replied. "You should buy at once; the chance of making twenty per cent. on them in two years is still open to you, and they pay a very fair rate of interest besides, five thousand livres is not a bad return on eighty thousand francs. You can buy now at eighty francs fifty centimes."

"We shall see," remarked Grandet pensively, rubbing his chin.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the notary, who by this time had unfolded his newspaper.

"Well, what is it?" cried Grandet as Cruchot put the paper in his hands and said—

"Read that paragraph."

"M. Grandet, one of the most highly-respected merchants

in Paris, shot himself through the head yesterday afternoon, after putting in an appearance on 'Change as usual. He had previously sent in his resignation to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, resigning his position as Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce at the same time. His affairs had become involved through the failures of his stockbroker and notary, MM. Roguin and Souchet. M. Grandet, whose character was greatly esteemed, and whose credit stood high, would no doubt have found temporary assistance on the market which would have enabled him to tide over his difficulties. It is to be regretted that a man of such high character should have given way to the first impulse of despair" —and so forth, and so forth.

"I knew it," the old vine-grower said.

Phlegmatic though Cruchot was, he felt a horrible shudder run through him at the words; perhaps Grandet of Paris had stretched imploring hands in vain to the millions of Grandet of Saumur; the blood ran cold in his veins.

"And his son?" he asked presently; "he was in such spirits yesterday evening."

"His son knows nothing as yet," Grandet answered, imperturbable as ever.

"Good-morning, M. Grandet," said Cruchot. He understood the position now, and went to reassure the President de Bonfons.

Grandet found breakfast ready. Mme. Grandet was already seated in her chair, mounted on the wooden blocks, and was knitting woolen cuffs for the winter. Eugénie ran to her mother and put her arms about her, with the eager hunger for affection that comes of a hidden trouble.

"You can get your breakfast," said Nanon, bustling downstairs in a hurry; "he is sleeping like a cherub. He looks so nice with his eyes shut! I went in and called him, but it was all one, he never heard me."

"Let him sleep," said Grandet; "he will wake soon enough to hear bad news, in any case."

"What is the matter?" asked Eugénie. She was putting into her cup the two smallest lumps of sugar, weighing goodness knows how many grains; her worthy parent was wont to amuse himself by cutting up sugar whenever he had nothing better to do.

Mme. Grandet, who had not dared to put the question herself, looked at her husband.

"His father has blown his brains out."

"*My uncle?*" said Eugénie.

"Oh! that poor boy!" cried Mme. Grandet.

"Poor indeed!" said Grandet; "he has not a penny."

"Ah! well, he is sleeping as if he were the king of all the world," said Nanon pityingly.

Eugénie could not eat. Her heart was wrung as a woman's heart can be when for the first time her whole soul is filled with sorrow and compassion for the sorrow of one she loves. She burst into tears.

"You did not know your uncle, so what is there to cry about?" said her father with a glance like a hungry tiger; just such a glance as he would give, no doubt, to his heaps of gold.

"But who wouldn't feel sorry for the poor young man, sir?" said the serving-maid; "sleeping there like a log, and knowing nothing of his fate."

"I did not speak to you, Nanon! Hold your tongue."

In that moment Eugénie learned that a woman who loves must dissemble her feelings. She was silent.

"Until I come back, Mme. Grandet, you will say nothing about this to him, I hope," the old cooper continued. "They are making a ditch in my meadows along the road, and I must go and see after it. I shall come back for the second breakfast at noon, and then my nephew and I will have a talk about his affairs. As for you, Mademoiselle Eugénie, if you

are crying over that popinjay, let us have no more of it, child. He will be off post-haste to the Indies directly, and you will never set eyes on *him* any more."

Her father took up his gloves, which were lying on the rim of his hat, put them on in his cool, deliberate way, inserting the fingers of one hand between those of the other, dovetail fashion, so as to thrust them down well into the tips of the gloves, and then he went out.

"Oh! mamma, I can scarcely breathe!" cried Eugénie, when she was alone with her mother; "I have never suffered like this!"

Mme. Grandet, seeing her daughter's white face, opened the window and let fresh air into the room.

"I feel better now," said Eugénie after a little while.

This nervous excitement in one who was usually so quiet and self-possessed produced an effect on Mme. Grandet. She looked at her daughter, and her mother's love and sympathetic instinct told her everything. But, in truth, the celebrated Hungarian twin-sisters, united to each other by one of nature's errors, could scarcely have lived in closer sympathy than Eugénie and her mother. Were they not always together: together in the window where they sat the livelong day, together at church; did they not breathe the same air even when they slept?

"My poor little girl!" said Mme. Grandet, drawing Eugénie's head down till it rested upon her bosom.

Her daughter lifted her face, and gave her mother a questioning look which seemed to read her inmost thoughts.

"Why must he be sent to the Indies?" said the girl. "If he is in trouble, ought he not to stay here with us? Is he not our nearest relation?"

"Yes, dear child, that would only be natural; but your father has reasons for what he does, and we must respect them."

Mother and daughter sat in silence; the one on her chair mounted on the wooden blocks, the other in her little arm-

chair. Both women took up their needlework. Eugénie felt that her mother understood her, and her heart was full of gratitude for such tender sympathy.

"How kind you are, dear mamma!" she said as she took her mother's hand and kissed it.

The worn, patient face, aged with many sorrows, lighted up at the words.

"Do you like him?" asked Eugénie.

For all answer, Mme. Grandet smiled. Then after a moment's pause she murmured, "You cannot surely love him already? That would be a pity."

"Why would it be a pity?" asked Eugénie. "You like him, Nanon likes him, why should I not like him too? Now then, mamma, let us set the table for his breakfast."

She threw down her work, and her mother followed her example, saying as she did so, "You are a mad girl!"

But none the less did she sanction her daughter's freak by assisting in it.

Eugénie called Nanon.

"Haven't you all you want yet, mamselle?"

"Nanon, surely you will have some cream by twelve o'clock?"

"By twelve o'clock? Oh! yes," answered the old servant.

"Very well, then, let the coffee be very strong. I have heard M. des Grassins say that they drink their coffee very strong in Paris. Put in plenty."

"And where is it to come from?"

"You must buy some."

"And suppose the master meets me?"

"He is down by the river."

"I will just slip out then. But M. Fessard asked me when I went about the candle if the Three Holy Kings were paying us a visit. Our goings on will be all over the town."

"Your father would be quite capable of beating us," said Mme. Grandet, "if he suspected anything of all this."

"Oh! well, then, never mind; he will beat us, we will take the beating on our knees."

At this Mme. Grandet raised her eyes to heaven, and said no more. Nanon put on her sun-bonnet and went out. Eugénie spread a clean linen tablecloth, then she went upstairs in quest of some bunches of grapes which she had amused herself by hanging from some strings up in the attic. She tripped lightly along the corridor, so as not to disturb her cousin, and could not resist the temptation to stop a moment before the door to listen to his even breathing.

"Trouble wakes while he is sleeping," she said to herself.

She arranged her grapes on the few last green vine-leaves as daintily as any experienced *chef d'office*, and set them on the table in triumph. She levied contributions on the pears which her father had counted out, and piled them up pyramid-fashion, with autumn leaves among them. She came and went, and danced in and out. She might have ransacked the house; the will was in nowise lacking, but her father kept everything under lock and key, and the keys were in his pocket. Nanon came back with two new-laid eggs. Eugénie could have flung her arms round the girl's neck.

"The farmer from La Lande had eggs in his basket; I asked him for some, and to please me he let me have these, the nice man."

After two hours of industrious application, Eugénie succeeded in preparing a very simple meal; it cost but little, it is true, but it was a terrible infringement of the immemorial laws and customs of the house. No one sat down to the mid-day meal, which consisted of a little bread, some fruit or butter, and a glass of wine. Twenty times in those two hours Eugénie had left her work to watch the coffee boil, or to listen for any sound announcing that her cousin was getting up; now looking round on the table drawn up to the fire, with one of the armchairs set beside it for her cousin, on the two plates of fruit, the egg-cups, the bottle of white wine, the

bread, and the little pyramid of white sugar in a saucer; Eugénie trembled from head to foot at the mere thought of the glance her father would give her if he should happen to come in at that moment. Often, therefore, did she look at the clock, to see if there was yet time for her cousin to finish his breakfast before her parent's return.

"Never mind, Eugénie, if your father comes in, I will take all the blame," said Mme. Grandet.

Eugénie could not keep back the tears. "Oh! my kind mother," she cried; "I have not loved you enough!"

Charles, after making innumerable pirouettes round his room, came down at last, singing gay little snatches of song. Luckily it was only eleven o'clock after all. He had taken as much pains with his appearance (the Parisian!) as if he had been staying in the château belonging to the high-born fair one who was traveling in Scotland; and now he came in with that gracious air of condescension which sits not ill on youth, and which gave Eugénie a melancholy pleasure. He had come to regard the collapse of his castles in Anjou as a very good joke, and went up to his aunt quite gaily.

"I hope you slept well, dear aunt? And you too, cousin?"

"Very well, sir; how did you sleep?"

"Soundly."

"Cousin, you must be hungry," said Eugénie; "sit down."

"Oh! I never breakfast before twelve o'clock, just after I rise. But I have fared so badly on my journey, that I will yield to persuasion. Besides——" he drew out the daintiest little watch that ever issued from Bréguet's workshop. "Dear me, it is only eleven o'clock; I have been up betimes."

"Up betimes?" asked Mme. Grandet.

"Yes, but I wanted to set my things straight. Well, I am quite ready for something, something not very substantial, a fowl or a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, hearing these words.

"A partridge," said Eugénie to herself. She would willingly have given all she had for one.

"Come and take your seat," said Mme. Grandet, addressing her nephew.

The dandy sank into the armchair in a graceful attitude, much as a pretty woman might recline on her sofa. Eugénie and her mother drew their chairs to the fire and sat near him.

"Do you always live here?" Charles inquired, thinking that the room looked even more hideous by daylight than by candlelight.

"Always," Eugénie answered, watching him as she spoke. "Always, except during the vintage. Then we go to help Nanon, and we all stay at the Abbey at Noyers."

"Do you ever take a walk?"

"Sometimes, on Sundays after vespers, when it is fine, we walk down as far as the bridge," said Mme. Grandet, "or we sometimes go to see them cutting the hay."

"Have you a theatre here?"

"Go to the play!" cried Mme. Grandet; "go to see play-actors! Why, sir, do you not know that that is a mortal sin?"

"There, sir," said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, "we will give you chickens in the shell."

"Oh! new-laid eggs," said Charles, who, after the manner of those accustomed to luxury, had quite forgotten all about his partridge. "Delicious! Do you happen to have any butter, eh, my good girl?"

"Butter? If you have butter now, you will have no cake by-and-by," said Nanon.

"Yes, of course, Nanon; bring some butter," cried Eugénie.

The young girl watched her cousin while he cut his bread and butter into strips and felt happy. The most romantic shopgirl in Paris could not more thoroughly enjoy the spectacle of innocence triumphant in a melodrama. It must be con-

ceded that Charles, who had been brought up by a graceful and charming mother, and had received his "finishing education" from an accomplished woman of the world, was as dainty, neat, and elegant in his ways as any coxcomb of the gentler sex. The girl's quiet sympathy produced an almost magnetic effect. Charles, finding himself thus waited upon by his cousin and aunt, could not resist the influence of their overflowing kindness. He was radiant with good-humor, and the look he gave Eugénie was almost a smile. As he looked more closely at her he noticed her pure, regular features, her unconscious attitude, the wonderful clearness of her eyes, in which love sparkled, though she as yet knew nothing of love but its pain and a wistful longing.

"Really, my dear cousin," he said, "if you were in a box at the opera and in evening dress, and I would answer for it, my aunt's remark about deadly sin would be fully justified, all the men would become envious and all the women jealous."

Eugénie's heart beat fast with joy at this compliment, though it conveyed no meaning whatever to her mind.

"You are laughing at a poor little country cousin," she said.

"If you knew me better, cousin, you would know that I detest banter; it sears the heart and deadens the feelings." And he swallowed down a strip of bread and butter with perfect satisfaction.

"No," he continued, "I never make fun of others, very likely because I have not wit enough, a defect which puts me at a great disadvantage. They have a deadly trick in Paris of saying, 'He is *so* good-natured,' which, being interpreted, means—'the poor youth is as stupid as a rhinoceros.' But as I happen to be rich, and it is known that I can hit the bull's eye straight off at thirty paces with any kind of pistol anywhere, these witticisms are not leveled at me."

"It is evident from what you say, nephew," said Mme. Grandet gravely, "that you have a kind heart."

"That is a very pretty ring of yours," said Eugénie; "is there any harm in asking to see it?"

Charles took off the ring and held it out; Eugénie reddened as her cousin's rose-pink nails came in contact with her finger-tips.

"Mother, only see how fine the work is!"

"Oh, what a lot of gold there is in it," said Nanon, who brought in the coffee.

"What is that?" asked Charles, laughing, as he pointed to an oval pipkin, made of glazed brown earthenware, ornamented without by a circular fringe of ashes. It was full of a brown boiling liquid, in which coffee grounds were visible as they rose to the surface and fell again.

"Coffee; boiling hot!" answered Nanon.

"Oh! my dear aunt, I must at least leave some beneficent trace of my stay here. You are a long way behind the times! I will show you how to make decent coffee in a Chaptal coffee-pot." Forthwith he endeavored to explain the principles on which this utensil is constructed, and how the coffee should be prepared.

"Bless me! if there is all that to-do about it," said Nanon, "you would have to give your whole time to it. I'll never make coffee that way, I know. Who is to cut the grass for our cow while I am looking after the coffee-pot?"

"I would do it," said Eugénie.

"*Child!*" said Mme. Grandet, with a look at her daughter; and at the word came a swift recollection of the misery about to overwhelm the unconscious young man, and the three women were suddenly silent, and gazed pityingly at him. He could not understand it.

"What is it, cousin?" he asked Eugénie.

"Hush!" said Mme. Grandet, seeing that the girl was about to reply. "You know that your father means to speak to the gentleman——"

"Say 'Charles,'" said young Grandet.

"Oh, is your name Charles?" said Eugénie. "It is a nice name."

Evil forebodings are seldom vain.

Just at that moment Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Nanon, who could not think of the cooper's return without shuddering, heard the familiar knock at the door.

"That is papa!" cried Eugénie.

She took away the saucer full of sugar, leaving one or two lumps on the tablecloth. Nanon hurried away with the egg-cups. Mme. Grandet started up like a frightened fawn. There was a sudden panic of terror, which amazed Charles, who was quite at a loss to account for it.

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked.

"My father is coming in," explained Eugénie.

"Well, and what then?"

M. Grandet entered the room, gave one sharp glance at the table, and another at Charles. He saw how it was at once.

"Aha! you are making a fête for your nephew. Good, very good, oh! very good, indeed!" he said, without stammering. "When the cat is away, the mice may play."

"Fête?" thought Charles, who had not the remotest conception of the state of affairs in the Grandet household.

"Bring me my glass, Nanon," said the good man.

Eugénie went for the glass. Grandet drew from his waistcoat pocket a large clasp-knife with a stag's horn handle, cut a slice of bread, buttered it slowly and sparingly, and began to eat as he stood. Just then Charles put some sugar into his coffee; this called Grandet's attention to the pieces of sugar on the table; he looked hard at his wife, who turned pale, and came a step or two towards him; he bent down and said in the poor woman's ear—

"Where did all that sugar come from?"

"Nanon went out to Fessard's for some; there was none in the house."

It is impossible to describe the painful interest that this

dumb show possessed for the three women; Nanon had left her kitchen, and was looking into the dining-room to see how things went there. Charles meanwhile tasted his coffee, found it rather strong, and looked round for another piece of sugar, but Grandet had already pounced upon it and taken it away.

"What do you want, nephew?" the old man inquired.

"The sugar."

"Pour in some more milk if your coffee is too strong," answered the master of the house.

Eugénie took up the saucer, of which Grandet had previously taken possession, and set it on the table, looking quietly at her father the while. Truly, the fair Parisian who exerts all the strength of her weak arms to help her lover to escape by a ladder of silken cords, displays less courage than Eugénie showed when she put the sugar upon the table. The Parisian will have her reward. She will proudly exhibit the bruises on a round white arm, her lover will bathe them with tears and cover them with kisses, and pain will be extinguished in bliss; but Charles had not the remotest conception of what his cousin endured for him, or of the horrible dismay that filled her heart as she met her father's angry eyes; he would never even know of her sacrifice.

"You are eating nothing, wife!"

The poor bond-slave went to the table, cut a piece of bread in fear and trembling, and took a pear. Eugénie, grown reckless, offered the grapes to her father, saying as she did so—

"Just try some of my fruit, papa! You will take some, will you not, cousin? I brought those pretty grapes down on purpose for you."

"Oh! if they could have their way, they would turn Saumur upside down for you, nephew! As soon as you have finished we will take a turn in the garden together; I have some things to tell you that would take a deal of sugar to sweeten them."

Eugénie and her mother both gave Charles a look, which the young man could not mistake.

"What do you mean by that, uncle? Since my mother died——" (here his voice softened a little) "there is no misfortune possible for me——"

"Who can know what afflictions God may send to make trial of us, nephew?" said his aunt.

"Tut, tut, tut," muttered Grandet, "here you are beginning with your folly already! I am sorry to see that you have such white hands, nephew."

He displayed the fists, like shoulders of mutton, with which nature had terminated his own arms.

"That is the sort of hand to rake the crowns together! You put the kind of leather on your feet that we used to make pocket-books of to keep bills in. That is the way you have been brought up. That's bad! that's bad!"

"What do you mean, uncle? I'll be hanged if I understand one word of this."

"Come along," said Grandet.

The miser shut his knife with a snap, drained his glass, and opened the door.

"Oh! keep up your courage, cousin!"

Something in the girl's voice sent a sudden chill through Charles; he followed his formidable relative with dreadful misgivings. Eugénie and her mother and Nanon went into the kitchen; an uncontrollable anxiety led them to watch the two actors in the scene which was about to take place in the damp little garden.

Uncle and nephew walked together in silence at first. Grandet felt the situation to be a somewhat awkward one; not that he shrank at all from telling Charles of his father's death, but he felt a kind of pity for a young man left in this way without a penny in the world, and he cast about for phrases that should break this cruel news as gently as might be. "You have lost your father!" he could say that; there was

nothing in that; fathers usually predecease their children. But, "You have not a penny!" All the woes of the world were summed up in those words, so for the third time the worthy man walked the whole length of the path in the centre of the garden, crunching the gravel beneath his heavy boots, and no word was said.

At all great crises in our lives, any sudden joy or great sorrow, there comes a vivid consciousness of our surroundings that stamps them on the memory forever; and Charles, with every faculty strained and intent, saw the box-edging to the borders, the falling autumn leaves, the mouldering walls, the gnarled and twisted boughs of the fruit-trees, and till his dying day every picturesque detail of the little garden came back with the memory of the supreme hour of that early sorrow.

"It is very fine, very warm," said Grandet, drawing in a deep breath of air.

"Yes, uncle, but why——"

"Well, my boy," his uncle resumed, "I have some bad news for you. Your father is very ill——"

"What am I doing here?" cried Charles. "Nanon!" he shouted, "order post-horses! I shall be sure to find a carriage of some sort in the place, I suppose," he added, turning to his uncle, who had not stirred from where he stood.

"Horses and carriage are of no use," Grandet answered, looking at Charles, who immediately stared straight before him in silence. "Yes, my poor boy, you guess what has happened; he is dead. But that is nothing; there is something worse; he has shot himself through the head——"

"*My father?*"

"Yes, but that is nothing either. The newspapers are discussing it, as if it were any business of theirs. There, read for yourself."

Grandet had borrowed Cruchot's paper, and now he laid

the fatal paragraph before Charles. The poor young fellow—he was only a lad as yet—made no attempt to hide his emotion, and burst into tears.

"Come, that is better," said Grandet to himself. "That look in his eyes frightened me. He is crying; he will pull through. Never mind, my poor nephew," Grandet resumed aloud, not knowing whether Charles heard him or no, "that is nothing, you will get over it, but——"

"Never! never! My father! my father!"

"He has ruined you; you are penniless."

"What is that to me. Where is my father? ——my father!" The sound of his sobbing filled the little garden, reverberated in ghastly echoes from the walls. Tears are as infectious as laughter; the three women wept with pity for him. Charles broke from his uncle without waiting to hear more, and sprang into the yard, found the staircase, and fled to his own room, where he flung himself across the bed and buried his face in the bedclothes, that he might give way to his grief in solitude as far as possible from these relations.

"Let him alone till the first shower is over," said Grandet, going back to the parlor. Eugénie and her mother had hastily returned to their places, had dried their eyes, and were sewing with cold trembling fingers.

"But that fellow is good for nothing," went on Grandet; "he is so taken up with dead folk that he doesn't even think about the money."

Eugénie shuddered to hear the most sacred of sorrows spoken of in such a way; from that moment she began to criticise her father. Charles' sobs, smothered though they were, rang through that house of echoes; the sounds seemed to come from under the earth, a heartrending wail that grew fainter towards the end of the day, and only ceased as night drew on.

"Poor boy!" said Mme. Grandet.

It was an unfortunate remark! M. Grandet looked at his

wife, then at Eugénie, then at the sugar basin; he recollected the sumptuous breakfast prepared that morning for their unhappy kinsman, and planted himself in the middle of the room.

"Oh! by-the-by," he said, in his usual cool, deliberate way, "I hope you will not carry your extravagance any farther, Mme. Grandet; I do not give you MY money for you to squander it on sugar for that young rogue."

"Mother had nothing whatever to do with it," said Eugénie. "It was I——"

"Because you are come of age," Grandet interrupted his daughter, "you think you can set yourself to thwart me, I suppose. Mind what you are about, Eugénie——"

"But, father, your own brother's son ought not to have to go without sugar in your house."

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" came from the cooper in a cadence of four semitones. "'Tis 'my nephew' here, and 'my brother's son' there; Charles is nothing to us; he has not a brass farthing. His father is a bankrupt, and when the young sprig has cried as much as he wishes, he shall clear out of this; I will not have my house turned topsy-turvy for him."

"What is a bankrupt, father?" asked Eugénie.

"A bankrupt," replied her father, "is guilty of the most dishonorable action that can dishonor a man."

"It must be a very great sin," said Mme. Grandet, "and our brother will perhaps be eternally lost."

"There you are with your preachments," her husband retorted, shrugging his shoulders. "A bankrupt, Eugénie," her father continued, "is a thief whom the law unfortunately takes under its protection. People trusted Guillaume Grandet with their goods, confiding in his character for fair-dealing and honesty; he has taken all they have, and left them nothing but the eyes in their heads to cry over their losses with. A bankrupt is worse than a highwayman; a highwayman sets upon you, and you have a chance to defend yourself; he risks

his life besides, while the other——Charles is disgraced, in fact."

The words filled the poor girl's heart; they weighed upon her with all their weight; she herself was so scrupulously conscientious; no flower in the depths of a forest had grown more delicately free from spot or stain; she knew none of the maxims of worldly wisdom, and nothing of its quibbles and its sophistries. So she accepted her father's cruel definition and sweeping statements as to bankrupts; he drew no distinction between a fraudulent bankruptcy and a failure from unavoidable causes, and how should she?

"But, father, could you not have prevented this misfortune?"

"My brother did not ask my advice; besides, his liabilities amount to four millions."

"How much is a million, father?" asked Eugénie, with the simplicity of a child who would fain have its wish fulfilled at once.

"A million?" queried Grandet. "Why, it is a million francs, four hundred thousand five-franc pieces; there are twenty sous in a franc, and it takes five francs of twenty sous each to make a five-franc piece."

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" cried Eugénie, "how came my uncle to have four millions of his own? Is there really anybody in France who has so many millions as that?"

Grandet stroked his daughter's chin and smiled. The wen seemed to grow larger.

"What will become of cousin Charles?"

"He will set out for the East Indies, and try to make a fortune. That is his father's wish."

"But has he any money to go with?"

"I shall pay his passage out as far as——yes——as far as Nantes."

Eugénie sprang up and flung her arms about her father's neck.

"Oh! father," she said, "you are good!"

Her warm embrace embarrassed Grandet somewhat, perhaps, too, his conscience was not quite at ease.

"Does it take a long while to make a million?" she asked.

"Lord! yes," said the cooper; "you know what a Napoleon is; well, then, it takes fifty thousand of them to make a million."

"Mamma, we will have a novena said for him."

"That was what I was thinking," her mother replied.

"Just like you! always thinking how to spend money. Really, one might suppose that we had any amount of money to throw away!"

As he spoke, a sound of low hoarse sobbing, more ominous than any which had preceded it, came from the garret. Eugénie and her mother shuddered.

"Nanon," called Grandet, "go up and see that he is not killing himself."

"Look here! you two," he continued, turning to his wife and daughter, whose cheeks grew white at his tones, "there is to be no nonsense, mind! I am leaving the house. I am going round to see the Dutchmen who are going to-day. Then I shall go to Cruchot and have a talk with him about all this."

He went out. As soon as the door closed upon Grandet, Eugénie and her mother breathed more freely. The girl had never felt constraint in her father's presence until that morning; but a few hours had wrought rapid changes in her ideas and feelings.

"Mamma, how many louis is a hogshead of wine worth?"

"Your father gets something between a hundred and a hundred and fifty francs for his; sometimes two hundred, I believe, from what I have heard him say."

"And would there be fourteen hundred hogsheads in a vintage?"

"I don't know how many there are, child, upon my word; your father never talks about business to me."

"But, anyhow, papa must be rich."

"May be. But M. Cruchot told me that your father bought Froidfond two years ago. That would be a heavy pull on him."

Eugénie, now at a loss as to her father's wealth, went no farther with her arithmetic.

"He did not even so much as see me, the poor dear!" said Nanon on her return. "He is lying there on his bed like a calf, crying like a Magdalen; you never saw the like! Poor young man, what can be the matter with him?"

"Let us go up at once and comfort him, mamma; if we hear a knock, we will come downstairs."

There was something in the musical tones of her daughter's voice which Mme. Grandet could not resist. Eugénie was sublime; she was a girl no longer, she was a woman. With beating hearts they climbed the stairs and went together to Charles' room. The door was open. The young man saw nothing, and heard nothing; he was absorbed in his grief, an inarticulate cry broke from him now and again.

"How he loves his father!" said Eugénie in a low voice, and in her tone there was an unmistakable accent which betrayed the passion in her heart, and hopes of which she herself was unaware. Mme. Grandet, with the quick instinct of a mother's love, glanced at her daughter and spoke in a low voice in her ear.

"Take care," she said, "or you may love him."

"Love him!" said Eugénie. "Ah! if you only knew what my father said."

Charles moved slightly as he lay, and saw his aunt and cousin.

"I have lost my father," he cried; "my poor father! If he had only trusted me and told me about his losses, we might have worked together to repair them. *Mon Dieu!*

my kind father! I was so sure that I should see him again, and I said good-bye so carelessly, I am afraid, never thinking——"

His words were interrupted by sobs.

"We will surely pray for him," said Mme. Grandet. "Submit yourself to the will of God."

"Take courage, cousin," said Eugénie gently; "nothing can give your father back to you; you must now think how to save your honor——"

A woman always has her wits about her, even in her capacity of comforter, and with instinctive tact Eugénie sought to divert her cousin's mind from his sorrow by leading him to think about himself.

"My honor?" cried the young man, hastily pushing back the hair from his eyes. He sat upright upon the bed, and folded his arms. "Ah! true. My uncle said that my father had failed."

He hid his face in his hands with a heartrending cry of pain.

"Leave me! leave me! cousin Eugénie," he entreated. "Oh! God, forgive my father, for he must have been terribly unhappy!"

There was something in the sight of this young sorrow, this utter abandonment of grief, that was horribly engaging. It was a sorrow that shrank from the gaze of others, and Charles' gesture of entreaty that they should leave him to himself was understood by Eugénie and her mother. They went silently downstairs again, took their places by the great window, and sewed on for nearly an hour without a word to each other.

Eugénie had looked round the room; it was a stolen glance. In one of those hasty surveys by which a girl sees everything in a moment, she had noticed the pretty trifles on the toilet-table—the scissors, the razors mounted with gold. The gleams of splendor and luxury, seen amidst all this misery, made Charles still more interesting in her eyes, per-

haps by the very force of the contrast. Their life had been so lonely and so quiet; such an event as this, with its painful interest, had never broken the monotony of their lives, little had occurred to stir their imagination, and now this tragical drama was being enacted under their eyes.

"Mamma," said Eugénie, "shall we wear mourning?"

"Your father will decide that," replied Mme. Grandet, and once more they sewed in silence. Eugénie's needle moved with a mechanical regularity, which betrayed her preoccupation of mind. The first wish of this adorable girl was to share her cousin's mourning. About four o'clock a sharp knock at the door sent a sudden thrill of terror through Mme. Grandet.

"What can have brought your father back?" she said to her daughter.

The vine-grower came in in high good-humor. He rubbed his hands so energetically that nothing but a skin like leather could have borne it, and indeed his hands were tanned like Russia leather, though the fragrant pine-rosin and incense had been omitted in the process. For a time he walked up and down and looked at the weather, but at last his secret escaped him.

"I have hooked them, wife," he said, without stammering; "I have them safe. Our wine is sold! The Dutchmen and Belgians were setting out this morning; I hung about in the market-place in front of their inn, looking as simple as I could. What's-his-name—you know the man—came up to me. All the best growers are hanging off and holding their vintages; they wanted to wait, and so they can, I have not hindered them. Our Belgian was at his wits' end, I saw that. So the bargain was struck; he is taking the whole of our vintage at two hundred francs the hogshead, half of it paid down at once in gold, and I have promissory notes for the rest. There are six louis for you. In three months' time prices will go down."

The last words came out quietly enough, but there was something so sardonic in the tone that if the little knots of growers, then standing in the twilight in the market-place of Saumur, in dismay at the news of Grandet's sale, had heard him speak, they would have shuddered; there would have been a panic on the market—wines would have fallen fifty per cent.

"You have a thousand hogsheads this year, father, have you not?" asked Eugénie.

"Yes, little girl."

These words indicated that the cooper's joy had indeed reached high-water mark.

"That will mean two hundred thousand francs?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"Well, then, father, you can easily help Charles."

The surprise, the wrath, and bewilderment with which Belshazzar beheld *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, written upon his palace wall were as nothing compared with Grandet's cold fury; he had forgotten all about Charles, and now he found that all his daughter's inmost thoughts were of his nephew, and that this arithmetic of hers referred to him. It was exasperating.

"Look here!" he thundered; "ever since that scapegrace set foot in *my* house everything has gone askew. You take it upon yourselves to buy sugar-plums, and make a great set-out for him. I will not have these doings. I should think, at my age, I ought to know what is right and proper to do. At any rate, I have no need to take lessons from my daughter, nor from any one else. I shall do for my nephew whatever it is right and proper for me to do; it is no business of yours, you need not meddle in it. And now, as for you, Eugénie," he added, turning towards her, "if you say another word about it, I will send you and Nanon off to the Abbey at Noyers, see if I don't. Where is that boy? has he come downstairs yet?"

"No, dear," answered Mme. Grandet.

"Why, what is he doing then?"

"He is crying for his father," Eugénie said.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and found nothing to say. There was some touch of the father even in him. He took one or two turns up and down, and then went straight to his strong-room to think over possible investments. He had thoughts of buying consols. Those two thousand acres of woodland had brought him in six hundred thousand francs; then there was the money from the sale of the poplars, there was last year's income from various sources, and this year's savings, to say nothing of the bargain which he had just concluded; so that, leaving those two hundred thousand francs out of the question, he possessed a lump sum of nine hundred thousand livres. That twenty per cent., to be made in so short a time upon his outlay, tempted him. Consols stood at seventy. He jotted down his calculations on the margin of the paper that had brought the news of his brother's death; the moans of his nephew sounded in his ears the while, but he did not hear them; he went on with his work until Nanon thumped vigorously on the thick wall to summon her master to dinner. On the last step of the staircase beneath the archway, Grandet paused and thought.

"There is the interest beside the eight per cent.—I will do it. Fifteen hundred thousand francs in two years' time, in gold from Paris too, full weight. Well, what has become of my nephew?"

"He said he did not want anything," replied Nanon. "He ought to eat, or he will fall ill."

"It is so much saved," was her master's comment.

"Lord! yes," she replied.

"Pooh! he will not keep on crying for ever. Hunger drives the wolf from the woods."

Dinner was a strangely silent meal. When the cloth had been removed, Mme. Grandet spoke to her husband:

"We ought to go into mourning, dear."

"Really, Mme. Grandet, you must be hard up for ways of getting rid of money. Mourning is in the heart; it is not put on with clothes."

"But for a brother mourning is indispensable, and the Church bids us——"

"Then buy mourning out of your six louis; a band of crape will do for me; you can get me a band of crape."

Eugénie said nothing, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her generous instincts, so long repressed and dormant, had been suddenly awakened, and every kindly thought had been harshly checked as it had arisen. Outwardly this evening passed just as thousands of others had passed in their monotonous lives, but for the two women it was the most painful that they had ever spent. Eugénie sewed without raising her head; she took no notice of the workbox which Charles had looked at so scornfully yesterday evening. Mme. Grandet knitted away at her cuffs. Grandet sat twirling his thumbs, absorbed in schemes which should one day bring about results that would startle Saumur. Four hours went by. Nobody dropped in to see them. As a matter of fact, the whole town was ringing with the news of Grandet's sharp practice, following on the news of his brother's failure and his nephew's arrival. So imperatively did Saumur feel the need to thrash these matters thoroughly out, that all the vine-growers, great or small, were assembled beneath the des Grassins' roof, and frightful were the imprecations which were launched at the head of their late mayor.

Nanon was spinning; the whirr of her wheel was the only sound in the great room beneath the gray-painted rafters.

"Our tongues don't go very fast," she said, showing her large teeth, white as blanched almonds.

"There is no call for them to go," answered Grandet, roused from his calculations.

He beheld a vision of the future—he saw eight millions in

three years' time—he had set forth on a long voyage upon a golden sea.

"Let us go to bed. I will go up and wish my nephew a good-night from you all, and see if he wants anything."

Mme. Grandet stayed on the landing outside her room-door to hear what her worthy husband might say to Charles. Eugénie, bolder than her mother, went a step or two up the second flight.

"Well, nephew, you are feeling unhappy? Yes, cry, it is only natural, a father is a father. But we must bear our troubles patiently. Whilst you have been crying, I have been thinking for you; I am a kind uncle, you see. Come, don't lose heart. Will you take a little wine? Wine costs nothing at Saumur; it is common here; they offer it as they might offer you a cup of tea in the Indies. But you are all in the dark," Grandet went on. "That's bad, that's bad; one ought to see what one is doing."

Grandet went to the chimney-piece.

"What!" he cried, "a wax-candle! Where the devil have they fished that from? I believe the wenches would pull up the floor of my house to cook eggs for that boy."

Mother and daughter, hearing these words, fled to their rooms, and crept into their beds like frightened mice.

"Mme. Grandet, you have a lot of money somewhere, it seems," said the vine-grower, walking into his wife's rooms.

"I am saying my prayers, dear; wait a little," faltered the poor mother.

"The devil take your pious notions!" growled Grandet.

Misers have no belief in a life to come, the present is all in all to them. But if this thought gives an insight into the miser's springs of action, it possesses a wider application, it throws a pitiless light upon our own era—for money is the one all-powerful force, ours is pre-eminently the epoch when money is the lawgiver, socially and politically. Books and institutions, theories and practice, all alike combine to weaken

the belief in a future life, the foundation on which the social edifice has been slowly reared for eighteen hundred years. The grave has almost lost its terrors for us. That future which awaited us beyond the *requiem* has been transported into the present, and one hope and one ambition possesses us all—to pass *per fas et nefas* into this earthly paradise of luxury, vanity, and pleasure, to deaden the soul and mortify the body for a brief possession of this promised land, just as in other days men were found willing to lay down their lives and to suffer martyrdom for the hope of eternal bliss. This thought can be read at large; it is stamped upon our age, which asks of the voter—the man who makes the laws—not "What do you think?" but "What can you pay?" And what will become of us when this doctrine has been handed down from the bourgeoisie to the people?

"Mme. Grandet, have you finished?" asked the cooper.

"I am praying for you, dear."

"Very well, good-night. To-morrow morning I shall have something to say to you."

Poor woman! she betook herself to sleep like a school-boy who has not learned his lessons, and sees before him the angry face of the master when he wakes. Sheer terror led her to wrap the sheets about her head to shut out all sounds, but just at that moment she felt a kiss on her forehead; it was Eugénie who had slipped into the room in the darkness, and stood there barefooted in her nightdress.

"Oh! mother, my kind mother," she said, "I shall tell him to-morrow morning that it was all my doing."

"No, don't; if you do, he will send you away to Noyers. Let me manage it; he will not eat me, after all."

"Oh! mamma, do you hear?"

"What?"

"*He* is crying still."

"Go back to bed, dear. The floor is damp, it will strike cold to your feet."

So ended the solemn day, which had brought for the poor wealthy heiress a lifelong burden of sorrow; never again would Eugénie Grandet sleep as soundly or as lightly as heretofore. It not seldom happens that at some time in their lives this or that human being will act literally "unlike himself," and yet in very truth in accordance with his nature. Is it not rather that we form our hasty conclusions of him without the aid of such light as psychology affords, without attempting to trace the mysterious birth and growth of the causes which led to these unforeseen results? And this passion, which had its roots in the depths of Eugénie's nature, should perhaps be studied as if it were the delicate fibre of some living organism to discover the secret of its growth. It was a passion that would influence her whole life, so that one day it would be sneeringly called a malady. Plenty of people would prefer to consider a catastrophe improbable rather than undertake the task of tracing the sequence of the events that led to it, to discovering how the links of the chain were forged one by one in the mind of the actor. In this case, Eugénie's past life will suffice to keen observers of human nature; her artless impulsiveness, her sudden outburst of tenderness will be no surprise to them. Womanly pity, that treacherous feeling, had filled her soul but the more completely because her life had been so uneventful that it had never been so called forth before.

So the trouble and excitement of the day disturbed her rest; she woke again and again to listen for any sound from her cousin's room, thinking that she still heard the moans that all day long had vibrated through her heart. Sometimes she seemed to see him lying up there, dying of grief; sometimes she dreamed that he was being starved to death. Towards morning she distinctly heard a terrible cry. She dressed herself at once, and in the dim light of the dawn fled noiselessly up the stairs to her cousin's room. The door stood open, the wax-candle had burned itself down to the socket.

Nature had asserted herself; Charles, still dressed, was sleeping in the armchair, with his head fallen forward on the bed; he had been dreaming as famished people dream. Eugénie admired the fair young face. It was flushed and tear-stained; the eyelids were swollen with weeping; he seemed to be still crying in his sleep, and Eugénie's own tears fell fast. Some dim feeling that his cousin was present awakened Charles; he opened his eyes, and saw her distress.

"Pardon me, cousin," he said dreamily. Evidently he had lost all reckoning of time, and did not know where he was.

"There are hearts here that feel for you, cousin, and *we* thought that you might perhaps want something. You should go to bed; you will tire yourself out if you sleep like that."

"Yes," he said, "that is true."

"Good-bye," she said, and fled, half in confusion, half-glad that she had come. Innocence alone dares to be thus bold, and virtue armed with knowledge weighs its actions as carefully as vice.

Eugénie had not trembled in her cousin's presence, but when she reached her own room again she could scarcely stand. Her ignorant life had suddenly come to an end; she remonstrated with herself, and blamed herself again and again. "What will he think of me? He will believe that I love him." Yet she knew that this was exactly what she wished him to believe. Love spoke plainly within her, knowing by instinct how love calls forth love. The moment when she stole into her cousin's room became a memorable event in the girl's lonely life. Are there not thoughts and deeds which, in love, are for some souls like a solemn betrothal?

An hour later she went to her mother's room, to help her to dress, as she always did. Then the two women went downstairs and took their places by the window, and waited for Grandet's coming in the anxiety which freezes or burns. Some natures cower, and others grow reckless, when a scene

or painful agitation is in prospect; the feeling of dread is so widely felt that domestic animals will cry out when the slightest pain is inflicted on them as a punishment, while the same creature if hurt inadvertently will not utter a sound.

The cooper came downstairs, spoke in an absent-minded way to his wife, kissed Eugénie, and sat down to table. He seemed to have forgotten last night's threats.

"What has become of my nephew? The child is not much in the way."

"He is asleep, sir," said Nanon.

"So much the better, he won't want a wax-candle for that," said Grandet facetiously.

His extraordinary mildness and satirical humor puzzled Mme. Grandet; she looked earnestly at her husband. The good man—here, perhaps, it may be observed that in Touraine, Anjou, Poitou, and Brittany the designation *good man* (*bonhomme*), which has been so often applied to Grandet, conveys no idea of merit; it is allowed to people of the worst temper as well as to good-natured idiots, and is applied without distinction to any man of a certain age—the good man, therefore, took up his hat and gloves with the remark—

"I am going to have a look round in the market-place; I want to meet the Cruchots."

"Eugénie, your father certainly has something on his mind."

As a matter of fact, Grandet always slept but little, and was wont to spend half the night in revolving and maturing schemes, a process by which his views, observations, and plans gained amazingly in clearness and precision; indeed, this was the secret of that constant success which was the admiration of Saumur. Time and patience combined will effect most things, and the man who accomplishes much is the man with the strong will who can wait. The miser's life is a constant exercise of every human faculty in the service of a personality. He believes in self-love and interest, and in no other motives

of action, but interest is in some sort another form of self-love, to wit, a practical form dealing with the tangible and the concrete, and both forms are comprised in one master-passion, for self-love and interest are but two manifestations of egoism. Hence, perhaps, the prodigious interest which a miser excites when cleverly put upon the stage. What man is utterly without ambition? And what social ambition can be obtained without money? Every one has something in common with this being; he is a personification of humanity, and yet is revolting to all the feelings of humanity.

Grandet really "had something on his mind," as his wife used to say. In Grandet, as in every miser, there was a keen relish for the game, a constant craving to play men off one against another for his own benefit, to mulct them of their crowns without breaking the law. And did not every victim who fell into his clutches renew his sense of power, his just contempt for the weak of the earth who let themselves fall such an easy prey? Ah! who has understood the meaning of the lamb that lies in peace at the feet of God, that most touching symbol of meek victims who are doomed to suffer here below, and of the future that awaits them hereafter, of weakness and suffering glorified at last? But here on earth it is quite otherwise; the lamb is the miser's legitimate prey, and by him (when it is fat enough) it is contemptuously penned, killed, cooked, and eaten. On money and on this feeling of contemptuous superiority, we may say, the miser thrives.

During the night this excellent man's ideas had taken an entirely new turn; hence his unusual mildness. He had been weaving a web to entangle them in Paris; he would envelop them in its toils, they should be as clay in his hands; they should hope and tremble, come and go, toil and sweat, and all for his amusement, all for the old cooper in the dingy room at the head of the worm-eaten staircase in the old house at Saumur; it tickled his sense of humor.

He had been thinking about his nephew. He wanted to save his dead brother's name from dishonor in a way that should not cost a penny either to his nephew or to himself. He was about to invest his money for three years, his mind was quite at leisure from his own affairs; he really needed some outlet for his malicious energy, and here was an opportunity supplied by his brother's failure. The claws were idle, he had nothing to squeeze between them, so he would pound the Parisians for Charles' benefit, and exhibit himself in the light of an excellent brother at a very cheap rate. As a matter of fact, the honor of the family name counted for very little with him in this matter; he looked at it from the purely impersonal point of view of the gambler, who likes to see a game well played, although it is no affair of his. The Cruchots were necessary to him, but he did not mean to go in search of them; they should come to him. That very evening the comedy should begin, the main outlines were decided upon already, to-morrow he would be held up as an object of admiration all over the town, and his generosity should not cost him a farthing!

Eugénie, in her father's absence, was free to busy herself openly for her cousin, to feel the pleasure of pouring out for him in many ways the wealth of pity that filled her heart; for in pity alone women are content that we should feel their superiority, and the sublimity of devotion is the one height which they can pardon us for leaving to them.

Three or four times Eugénie went to listen to her cousin's breathing, that she might know whether he was awake or still sleeping; and when she was sure that he was rising, she turned her attention to his breakfast, and cream, coffee, fruit, eggs, plates, and glasses were all in turn the objects of her especial care. She softly climbed the rickety stairs to listen again. Was he dressing? Was he still sobbing? She went to the door at last and spoke—

"Cousin!"

"Yes, cousin."

"Would you rather have breakfast downstairs or up here in your room?"

"Whichever you please."

"How do you feel?"

"I am ashamed to say that I am hungry."

This talk through the closed door was like an episode in a romance for Eugénie.

"Very well then, we will bring your breakfast up to your room, so that my father may not be vexed about it."

She sprang downstairs, and ran into the kitchen with the swiftness of a bird.

"Nanon, just go and set his room straight."

The familiar staircase which she had gone up and down so often, and which echoed with every sound, seemed no longer old in Eugénie's eyes; it was radiant with light, it seemed to speak a language which she understood, it was young again as she herself was, young like the love in her heart. And the mother, the kind, indulgent mother, was ready to lend herself to her daughter's whims, and as soon as Charles' room was ready they both went thither to sit with him. Does not Christian charity bid us comfort the mourner? Little religious sophistries were not wanting by which the women justified themselves.

Charles Grandet received the most tender and affectionate care. Such delicate tact and sweet kindness touched him very closely in his desolation; and for these two souls, they found a moment's freedom from the restraint under which they lived; they were at home in an atmosphere of sorrow; they could give him the quick sympathy of fellowship in misfortune. Eugénie could avail herself of the privilege of relationship to set his linen in order, and to arrange the trifles that lay on the dressing-table; she could admire the wonderful knickknacks at her leisure; all the paraphernalia of luxury, the delicately-wrought gold and silver passed through

her hands, her fingers dwelt lingeringly on them under the pretext of looking closely at the workmanship.

Charles was deeply touched by the generous interest which his aunt and cousin took in him. He knew Parisian life quite sufficiently to know that under these circumstances his old acquaintances and friends would have grown cold and distant at once. But his trouble had brought out all the peculiar beauty of Eugénie's character, and he began to admire the simplicity of manner which had provoked his amusement but yesterday. So when Eugénie waited on her cousin with such frank good-will, taking from Nanon the earthenware bowl full of coffee and cream to set it before him herself, the Parisian's eyes filled with tears ; and when he met her kind glance, he impulsively took her hand in his and fervently kissed it.

"Well, what is the matter now?" she asked.

"Oh ! they are tears of gratitude," he answered.

Eugénie turned hastily away, took the candles from the chimney-piece and held them out to Nanon.

"Here," she said, "take these away."

When she could look at her cousin again, the flush was still on her face, but her eyes at least did not betray her, and gave no sign of the excess of joy that flooded her heart ; yet the same thought was dawning in both their souls, and could be read in the eyes of either, and they knew that the future was theirs. This thrill of happiness was all the sweeter to Charles in his great sorrow, because it was so little expected.

There was a knock at the door, and both the women hurried down to their places by the window. It was lucky for them that their flight downstairs was sufficiently precipitate, and that they were at their work when Grandet came in, for if he had met them beneath the archway, all his suspicions would be aroused at once. After the mid-day meal, which he took standing, the keeper, who had not yet received his promised reward, appeared from Froidfond, bringing with

him a hare, some partridges shot in the park, a few eels, and a couple of pike sent by him from the miller's.

"Aha! so here is old Cornoiller; you come just when you are wanted, like salt fish in Lent. Is all that fit to eat?"

"Yes, sir; all killed the day before yesterday."

"Come, Nanon, look alive! Just take this, it will do for dinner to-day; the two Cruchots are coming."

Nanon opened her eyes with amazement, and stared first at one and then at another.

"Oh! indeed," she said, "and where are the herbs and the bacon to come from?"

"Wife," said Grandet, "let Nanon have six francs, and remind me to go down into the cellar to look out a bottle of good wine."

"Well, then, M. Grandet," the gamekeeper began (he wished to see the question of his salary properly settled, and was duly primed with a speech), "M. Grandet——"

"Tut, tut, tut," said Grandet, "I know what you are going to say; you are a good fellow, we will see about that to-morrow, I am very busy to-day. Give him five francs, wife," he added, looking at Mme. Grandet, and with that he beat a retreat. The poor woman was only too happy to purchase peace at the price of eleven francs. She knew by experience that Grandet usually kept quiet for a fortnight after he had made her disburse coin by coin the money which he had given her.

"There, Cornoiller," she said, as she slipped ten francs into his hand; "we will repay you for your services one of these days."

Cornoiller had no answer ready, so he went.

"Madame," said Nanon, who had by this time put on her black bonnet and had a basket on her arm, "three francs will be quite enough; keep the rest. I shall manage just as well with three."

"Let us have a good dinner, Nanon; my cousin is coming downstairs," said Eugénie.

"There is something very extraordinary going on, I am sure," said Mme. Grandet. "This makes the third time since we were married that your father has asked any one here to dinner."

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon; Eugénie and her mother had laid the cloth and set the table for six persons, and the master of the house had brought up two or three bottles of the exquisite wines, which are jealously hoarded in the cellars of the vine-growing district.

Charles came into the dining-room looking white and sad; there was a pathetic charm about his gestures, his face, his looks, the tones of his voice; his sorrow had given him the interesting look that women like so well, and Eugénie only loved him the more because his features were worn with pain. Perhaps, too, this trouble had brought them nearer in other ways. Charles was no longer the rich and handsome young man who lived in a sphere far beyond her ken; he was a kinsman in deep and terrible distress, and sorrow is a great leveler. Woman has this in common with the angels—all suffering creatures are under her protection.

Charles and Eugénie understood each other without a word being spoken on either side. The poor dandy of yesterday, fallen from his high estate, to-day was an orphan, who sat in a corner of the room, quiet, composed, and proud; but from time to time he met his cousin's eyes, her kind and affectionate glance rested on him, and compelled him to shake off his dark and sombre broodings, and to look forward with her to a future full of hope, in which she loved to think that she might share.

The news of Grandet's dinner-party caused even greater excitement in Saumur than the sale of his vintage, although this latter proceeding had been a crime of the blackest dye, an act of high treason against the vine-growing interest. If Grandet's banquet to the Cruchots has been prompted by the same idea which on a memorable occasion cost Alcibiades'

dog its tail, history might perhaps have heard of the miser; but he felt himself to be above public opinion in this town which he exploited; he held Saumur too cheap.

It was not long before the des Grassins heard of Guillaume Grandet's violent end and impending bankruptcy. They determined to pay a visit to their client that evening, to condole with him in his affliction, and to show a friendly interest; while they endeavored to discover the motives which could have led Grandet to invite the Cruchots to dinner at such a time.

Precisely at five o'clock President C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary arrived, dressed up to the nines this time. The guests seated themselves at table, and began by attacking their dinner with remarkably good appetites. Grandet was solemn, Charles was silent, Eugénie was dumb, and Mme. Grandet said no more than usual; if it had been a funeral repast, it could not well have been less lively. When they rose from the table, Charles addressed his aunt and uncle—

"Will you permit me to withdraw? I have some long and difficult letters to write."

"By all means, nephew."

When Charles had left the room, and his amiable relative could fairly assume that he was out of earshot and deep in his correspondence, Grandet gave his wife a sinister glance.

"Mme. Grandet, what we are going to say will be Greek to you; it is half-past seven o'clock, you ought to be off to bed by this time. Good-night, my daughter." He kissed Eugénie, and mother and daughter left the room.

Then the drama began. Now, if ever in his life, Grandet displayed all the shrewdness which he had acquired in the course of his long experience of men and business, and all the cunning which had gained him the nickname of "old fox" among those who had felt his teeth a little too sharply. Had the ambition of the late mayor of Saumur soared a little higher; if he had had the luck to rise to a higher social sphere, and

destiny had sent him to mingle in some congress in which the fate of nations is at stake, the genius which he was now devoting to his own narrow ends would doubtless have done France glorious service. And yet, after all, the probability is that once away from Saumur the worthy cooper would have cut but a poor figure, and that minds, like certain plants and animals, are sterile when removed to a distant climate and an alien soil.

"M-m-monsieur le P-p-président, you were s-s-saying that b-b-bankruptcy——"

Here the trick of stammering which it had pleased the vine-grower to assume so long ago that every one believed it to be natural to him (like the deafness of which he was wont to complain in rainy weather), grew so unbearably tedious for the Cruchot pair, that as they strove to catch the syllables, they made unconscious grimaces, moving their lips as if they would fain finish the words in which the cooper entangled both himself and them at his pleasure.

And here, perhaps, is the fitting place to record the history of Grandet's deafness and the impediment in his speech. No one in Anjou had better hearing or could speak Angevin French more clearly and distinctly than the wily vine-grower—when he chose. Once upon a time, in spite of all his shrewdness, a Jew had gotten the better of him. In the course of their discussion the Israelite had applied his hand to his ear, in the manner of an ear-trumpet, the better to catch what was said, and had gibbered to such purpose in his search for a word, that Grandet, a victim to his own humanity, felt constrained to suggest to that crafty Hebrew the words and ideas of which the Israelite appeared to be in search, to finish himself the reasonings of the said Hebrew, to say for that accursed alien all that he ought to have said for himself, till Grandet ended by fairly changing places with the Jew.

From this curious contest of wits the vine-grower did not emerge triumphant; indeed, for the first and last time in his

business career he made a bad bargain. But loser though he was from a money point of view, he had received a great practical lesson, and later on he reaped the fruits of it. Wherefore in the end he blessed the Jew who had shown him how to wear out the patience of an opponent, and to keep him so closely employed in expressing his adversary's ideas that he completely lost sight of his own. The present business required more deafness, more stammering, more of the mazy circumlocutions in which Grandet was wont to involve himself, than any previous transaction in his life; for, in the first place, he wished to throw the responsibility of his ideas on some one else; some one else was to suggest his own schemes to him, while he was to keep himself to himself, and leave every one in the dark as to his real intentions.

"Mon-sieur de B-B-Bonfons." (This was the second time in three years that he had called the younger Cruchot "M. de Bonfons," and the president might well consider that this was almost tantamount to being acknowledged as the crafty cooper's son-in-law.)

"You were s-s-s-saying that in certain cases, p-p-p-proceedings in b-b-bankruptcy might be s-s-s-stopped b-b-by——"

"At the instance of a Tribunal of Commerce. That is done every day of the year," said M. C. de Bonfons, guessing, as he thought, at old Grandet's idea, and running away with it. "Listen!" he said, and in the most amiable way he prepared to explain himself.

"I am l-listening," replied the older man meekly, and his face assumed a demure expression; he looked like some small boy who is laughing in his sleeve at the schoolmaster while appearing to pay the most respectful attention to every word.

"When anybody who is in a large way of business and is much looked up to, like your late brother in Paris, for instance——"

"My b-b-brother, yes."

"When any one in that position is likely to find himself insolvent——"

"Ins-s-solvent, do they call it?"

"Yes. When his failure is imminent, the Tribunal of Commerce, to which he is amenable (do you follow me?) has power by a judgment to appoint liquidators to wind up the business. Liquidation is not bankruptcy, do you understand? It is a disgraceful thing to be a bankrupt, but a *liquidation* reflects no discredit on a man."

"It is quite a d-d-d-different thing, if only it d-d-does not cost any more," said Grandet.

"Yes. But a liquidation can be privately arranged without having recourse to the Tribunal of Commerce," said the president as he took a pinch of snuff. "How is a man declared bankrupt!"

"Yes, how?" inquired Grandet. "I have n-n-never thought about it."

"In the first place, he may himself file a petition and leave his schedule with the clerk of the court, the debtor himself draws it up or authorizes some one else to do so, and it is duly registered. Or, in the second place, his creditors may make him a bankrupt. But supposing the debtor does not file a petition, and none of his creditors make application to the court for a judgment declaring him bankrupt; now let us see what happens then!"

"Yes, let us s-s-see."

"In that case, the family of the deceased, or his representatives, or his residuary legatee, or the man himself (if he is not dead), or his friends for him (if he has absconded), liquidate his affairs. Now, possibly, *you* may intend to do this in your brother's case?" inquired the president.

"Oh! Grandet," exclaimed the notary, "that would be acting very handsomely. We in the provinces have our notions of honor. If you saved your name from dishonor, for it is your name, you would be——"

"Sublime!" cried the president, interrupting his uncle.

"Of course, my b-b-brother's n-n-name was Grandet, th-that is certain sure, I d-d-don't deny it, and anyhow this l-l-l-l-liquidation would be a very g-good thing for my n-n-nephew in every way, and I am very f-f-fond of him. But we shall see. I know n-n-nothing of those sharpers in Paris, and their t-tricks. And here am I at S-Saumur, you see! There are my vine-cuttings, m-my d-d-draining; in sh-sh-short, there are my own af-f-fairs, to s-s-see after. *I* have n-n-never accepted a bill. What is a bill? I have t-t-taken many a one, b-b-but I have n-n-never put my n-n-name to a piece of p-paper. You t-t-take 'em and you can d-d-d-discount 'em, and that is all I know. I have heard s-s-say that you can b-b-b-buy them——"

"Yes," assented the president. "You can buy bills on the market, less so much per cent. Do you understand?"

Grandet held his hand to his ear, and the president repeated his remark.

"But it s-s-seems there are t-t-two s-sides to all this?" replied the vine-grower. "At my age, I know n-n-nothing about this s-s-sort of thing. I must st-top here to l-look after the g-g-grapes, the vines d-d-don't stand still, and the g-g-grapes have to p-pay for everything. The vintage m-must be l-l-looked after before anything else. Then I have a g-great d-d-deal on my hands at Froidfond that I can't p-p-possibly l-l-l-leave to any one else. I don't underst-t-tand a word of all this; it is a p-p-pretty kettle of fish, confound it; I can't l-l-leave home to s-see after it. You s-s-s-say that to bring about a l-l-liquidation I ought to be in Paris. Now you can't be in t-t-two p-places at once unless you are a b-b-bird."

"*I* see what you mean," cried the notary. "Well, my old friend, you have friends, friends of long standing ready to do a great deal for you."

"Come, now!" said the vine-grower to himself, "so you are making up your minds, are you?"

"And if some one were to go to Paris, and find up your brother Guillaume's largest creditor, and say to him——"

"Here, just l-l-listen to me a moment," the cooper struck in. "Say to him——what? S-s-something like this: 'M. Grandet of Saumur th-this, M. Grandet of Saumur th-th-that. He l-l-loves his brother, he has a r-r-regard for his n-nephew; Grandet thinks a l-l-lot of his f-family, he means to d-do well by them. He has just s-s-sold his vintage uncommonly well. Don't drive the thing into b-b-b-bankruptcy, call a meeting of the creditors, and ap-p-point l-l-liquidators. Then s-see what Grandet will do. You will do a great d-deal b-b-better for yourselves by coming to an arrangement than by l-l-letting the l-l-lawyers poke their noses into it.' That is how it is, eh?"

"Quite so!" said the president.

"Because, look you here, Monsieur de Bon-Bon-Bonfons, you must l-l-look before you l-l-l-leap. And you can't d-do more than you can. A big af-f-fair like this wants l-l-looking into, or you may ru-ru-ruin yourself. That is so, isn't it, eh?"

"Certainly," said the president, "I myself am of the opinion that in a few months' time you could buy up the debts for a fixed sum and pay by installments. Aha! you can trail a dog a long way with a bit of bacon. When a man has not been declared bankrupt, as soon as the bills are in your hands, you will be as white as snow."

"As s-s-s-snow?" said Grandet, holding his hand to his ear. "S-s-s-snow. I don't underst-t-tand."

"Why, then, just listen to me!" cried the president.

"I am l-l-listening——"

"A bill of exchange is a commodity subject to fluctuations in value. This is a deduction from Jeremy Bentham's theory of interest. He was a publicist who showed conclusively that the prejudices entertained against money-lenders were irrational."

"Bless me!" put in Grandet.

"And seeing that, according to Bentham, money itself is a commodity, and that which money represents is no less a commodity," the president went on; "and since it is obvious that the commodity called a bill of exchange is subject to the same laws of supply and demand that control production of all kinds, a bill of exchange bearing this or that signature, like this or that article of commerce, is scarce or plentiful in the market, commands a high premium or is worth nothing at all. Wherefore the decision of this court—— There! how stupid I am, I beg your pardon; I mean I am of the opinion that you could easily buy up your brother's debts for twenty-five per cent of their value."

"You m-m-m-mentioned Je-je-je-jeremy Ben——"

"Bentham, an Englishman."

"That is a Jeremiah who will save us many lamentations in business matters," said the notary, laughing.

"The English s-s-sometimes have s-s-s-sensible notions," said Grandet. "Then, according to B-Bentham, how if my b-b-brother's b-bills are worth n-n-n-nothing? If I am right, it looks to me as if——the creditors would——n-no, they wouldn't——I underst-t-tand."

"Let me explain all this to you," said the president. "In law, if you hold all the outstanding bills of the firm of Grandet, your brother, his heirs and assigns, would owe no one a penny. So far, so good."

"Good," echoed Grandet.

"And in equity; suppose that your brother's bills were negotiated upon the market (negotiated, do you understand the meaning of that term?) at a loss of so much per cent.; and suppose one of your friends happened to be passing, and bought up the bills; there would have been no physical force brought to bear upon the creditors, they gave them up of their own free-will, and the estate of the late Grandet of Paris would be clear in the eye of the law."

"True," stuttered the cooper, "b-b-business is business.

So that is s-s-s-settled. But, for all that, you understand that it is a d-d-difficult matter. I have not the m-m-money, nor have I the t-t-t-time, nor——"

"Yes, yes; you cannot be at the trouble. Well, now, I will go to Paris for you if you like (you must stand the expenses of the journey, that is a mere trifle). I will see the creditors, and talk to them, and put them off; it can all be arranged; you will be prepared to add something to the amount realized by the liquidation so as to get the bills into your hands."

"We shall s-see about that; I cannot and *will* not under-t-t-take anything unless I know——You can't d-d-do more than you can, you know."

"Quite so, quite so."

"And I am quite bewildered with all these head-splitting ideas that you have sp-prung upon me. Th-this is the f-f-f-first t-time in my l-l-life that I have had to th-th-think about such th——"

"Yes, yes, you are not a consulting barrister."

"I am a p-p-poor vine-grower, and I know n-n-nothing about what you have just t-t-t-told me; I m-m-must th-think it all out."

"Well! then," began the president, as if he meant to reopen the discussion.

"Nephew!" interrupted the notary reproachfully.

"Well, uncle?" answered the president.

"Let M. Grandet explain what he means to do. It is a very important question, and you are to receive his instructions. Our dear friend might now very pertinently state——"

A knock at the door announced the arrival of the des Grassins; their coming and exchange of greetings prevented Cruchot senior from finishing his sentence. Nor was he ill-pleased with this diversion; Grandet was looking askance at him already, and there was that about the wen on the cooper's face which indicated that a storm was brewing

within. And on sober reflection it seemed to the cautious notary that a president of a court of first instance was not exactly the person to dispatch to Paris, there to open negotiations with creditors, and to lend himself to a more than dubious transaction which, however you looked at it, hardly squared with notions of strict honesty; and not only so, but he had particularly noticed that M. Grandet had shown not the slightest inclination to disburse anything whatever, and he trembled instinctively at the thought of his nephew becoming involved in such a business. He took advantage of the entrance of the des Grassins, took his nephew by the arm, and drew him into the embrasure of the window.

"You have gone quite as far as there is any need," he said, "that is quite enough of such zeal; you are overreaching yourself in your eagerness to marry the girl. The devil! You should not rush into a thing open-mouthed, like a crow at a walnut. Leave the steering of the ship to me for a bit, and just shift your sails according to the wind. Now, is it a part you ought to play, compromising your dignity as magistrate in such a——"

He broke off suddenly, for he heard M. des Grassins saying to the old cooper, as he held out his hand—

"Grandet, we have heard of the dreadful misfortunes which have befallen your family—the ruin of the firm of Guillaume Grandet and your brother's death; we have come to express our sympathy and to offer you our consolation in this sad calamity."

"There is only one misfortune," the notary interrupted at this point, "the death of the younger M. Grandet; and if he had thought to ask his brother for assistance, he would not have taken his own life. Our old friend here, who is a man of honor to his finger-tips, is prepared to discharge the debts contracted by the firm of Grandet in Paris. In order to spare our friend the worry of what is, after all, a piece of lawyer's business, my nephew the president offers to start immediately

for Paris, so as to arrange with the creditors, and duly satisfy their claims."

The three des Grassins were thoroughly taken aback by these words; Grandet appeared to acquiesce in what had been said, for he was pensively stroking his chin. On their way to the house the family had commented very freely upon Grandet's niggardliness, and indeed had almost gone so far as to accuse him of fratricide.

"Ah! just what I expected!" cried the banker, looking at his wife. "What was I saying to you only just now as we came along, Mme. des Grassins? Grandet, I said, is a man who will never swerve a hair's-breadth from the strict course of honor; he will not endure the thought of the slightest spot on his name! Money without honor is a disease. Oh! we have a keen sense of honor in the provinces! This is noble—really noble of you, Grandet. I am an old soldier, and I do not mince matters, I say what I think straight out; and *mille tonnerres!* (thousand thunders) this is sublime!"

"Then the s-s-sub-sublime costs a great d-d-deal," stuttered the cooper, as the banker shook him warmly by the hand.

"But this, my good Grandet (no offense to you, M. le Président), is simply a matter of business," des Grassins went on, "and requires an experienced man of business to deal with it. There will have to be accounts kept of sales and outgoing expenses; you ought to have tables of interest at your finger-ends. I must go to Paris on business of my own, and I could undertake——"

"Then we must s-s-see about it, and t-t-t-try to arrange between us to p-p-provide for anything that m-may t-t-turn up, but I d-d-don't want to be d-d-drawn into anything that I would rather not d-d-d-do," continued Grandet, "because, you see, M. le Président naturally wants me to pay his expenses." The good man did not stammer over these last words.

"Eh?" said Mme. des Grassins. "Why, it is a pleasure

to stay in Paris! For my part, I should be glad to go there at my own expense."

She made a sign to her husband, urging him to seize this opportunity of discomfiting their enemies and cheat them of their mission. Then she flung a withering glance at the now crestfallen and miserable Cruchots. Grandet seized the banker by the button-hole and drew him aside.

"I should feel far more confidence in you than in the president," he remarked; "and besides that," he added (and the wen twitched a little), "there are other fish to fry. I want to make an investment. I have several thousand francs to put into consols, and I don't mean to pay more than eighty for them. Now, from all I can hear, that machine always runs down at the end of the month. You know all about these things, I expect?"

"*Pardieu!* I should think I did. Well, then, I shall have to buy several thousand livres worth of consols for you."

"Just by way of a beginning. But mum, I want to play at this game without letting any one know about it. You will buy them for me at the end of the month, and say nothing to the Cruchots; it would only annoy them. Since you are going to Paris, we might as well see at the same time what trumps are for my poor nephew's sake."

"That is an understood thing. I shall travel post to Paris to-morrow," said des Grassins aloud, "and I will come round to take your final instructions at—when shall we say?"

"At five o'clock, before dinner," said the vine-grower, rubbing his hands.

The two factions for a little while remained facing each other. Des Grassins broke the silence again, clapping Grandet on the shoulder, and saying—

"It is a fine thing to have a good uncle like——"

"Yes, yes," returned Grandet, falling into the stammer again, "without m-making any p-p-parade about it; I am a

good uncle; I l-l-loved my brother; I will give p-p-p-proof of it, if-if-if it d-doesn't cost——"

Luckily the banker interrupted him at this point.

"We must go, Grandet. If I am to set out sooner than I intended, I shall have to see after some business at once before I go."

"Right, quite right. I myself, in connection with you know what, must p-p-put on my cons-s-sidering cap, as P-President Cruchot s-s-says."

"Plague take it! I am no longer M. de Bonfons," thought the magistrate moodily, and his face fell; he looked like a judge who is bored by the cause before him.

The heads of the rival clans went out together. Both had completely forgotten Grandet's treacherous crime of that morning; his disloyal behavior had faded from their minds. They sounded each other, but to no purpose, as to Grandet's real intentions (if intentions he had) in this new turn that matters had taken.

"Are you coming with us to Mme. Dorsonval's?" des Grassins asked the notary.

"We are going there later on," replied the president. "With my uncle's permission, we will go first to see Mlle. de Gribeaucourt; I promised just to look in on her to say good-night."

"We shall meet again, then," smiled Mme. des Grassins.

But when the des Grassins were at some distance from the two Cruchots, Adolphe said to his father, "They are in a pretty stew, eh?"

"Hush!" returned his mother, "they can very likely hear what we are saying, and, besides, that remark of yours was not in good taste; it sounds like one of your law school phrases."

"Well, uncle!" cried the magistrate, when he saw the des Grassins were out of earshot, "I began by being President de Bonfons and ended as plain Cruchot."

"I saw myself that you were rather put out about it; and the des Grassins took the wind out of our sails. How stupid you are, for all your sharpness! Let *them* set sail, on the strength of a 'We shall see' from Grandet; be easy, my boy, Eugénie shall marry you for all that."

A few moments later and the news of Grandet's magnanimity was set circulating in three houses at once; the whole town talked of nothing but Grandet's devotion to his brother. The sale of his vintage in utter disregard of the agreement made among the vine-growers was forgotten; every one fell to praising his scrupulous integrity and to lauding his generosity, a quality which no one had suspected him of possessing. There is that in the French character which is readily excited to fury or to passionate enthusiasm by any meteor that appears above their horizon, that is captivated by the bravery of a blatant fact. Can it be that collectively men have no memories?

As soon as Grandet had bolted the house-door he called to Nanon:

"Don't go to bed," he said, "and don't unchain the dog; there is something to be done, and we must do it together. Cornoiller will be round with the carriage from Froidfond at eleven o'clock. You must sit up for him, and let him in quietly; don't let him rap at the door, and tell him not to make a noise. You get into trouble with the police if you raise a racket at night. And, besides, there is no need to let all the quarter know that I am going out."

Having thus delivered himself, Grandet went up to his laboratory, and Nanon heard him stirring about, rummaging, going and coming, all with great caution. Clearly he had no wish to waken his wife or daughter, and above all things he desired in nowise to excite any suspicion in the mind of his nephew; he had seen that a light was burning in the young man's room, and had cursed his relative forthwith.

In the middle of the night Eugénie heard a sound like the

groan of a dying man; her cousin was always in her thoughts, and for her the dying man was Charles. How white and despairing he had looked when he wished her good-night; perhaps he had killed himself. She hastily wrapped herself in her capuchine, a sort of long cloak with a hood to it, and determined to go to see for herself. Some rays of bright light streaming through the cracks of her door frightened her not a little at first, perhaps the house was on fire; but she was soon reassured. She could hear Nanon's heavy footsteps outside, and the sounds of the old servant's voice mingled with the neighing of several horses.

"Can my father be taking Charles away?" she asked herself, as she set her door ajar, cautiously for fear the hinges should creak, so that she could watch all that was going on in the corridor.

All at once her eyes met those of her father, and, absent and indifferent as they looked, a cold shudder ran through her. The cooper and Nanon were coming along carrying something which hung by a chain from a stout cudgel, one end of which rested on the right shoulder of either; the something was a little barrel such as Grandet sometimes amused himself by making in the bakehouse, when he had nothing better to do.

"Holy Virgin! how heavy it is, sir!" said Nanon in a whisper.

"What a pity it is only full of pence!" replied the cooper. "Lookout! or you will knock down the candlestick."

The scene was lighted by a single candle set between two balusters.

"Cornoiller," said Grandet to his gamekeeper *in partibus*, "have you your pistols with you?"

"No, sir. Lord, love you! What can there be to fear for a keg of coppers?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing," said M. Grandet.

"Besides, we shall get over the ground quickly," the keeper

went on; "your tenants have picked out their best horses for you."

"Well, well. You did not let them know where I was going?"

"I did not know that myself."

"Right. Is the carriage strongly built?"

"That's all right, master. Why, what is the weight of a few paltry barrels like those of yours? It would carry two or three thousand like them."

"Well," said Nanon, "I know there's pretty nigh eighteen hundredweight *there*, that there is!"

"Will you hold you tongue, Nanon! You tell my wife that I have gone into the country, and that I shall be back to dinner. Hurry up, Cornoiller; we must be in Angers before nine o'clock."

The carriage started. Nanon bolted the gateway, let the dog loose, and lay down and slept in spite of her bruised shoulder; and no one in the quarter had any suspicion of Grandet's journey or of its object. The worthy man was a miracle of circumspection. Nobody ever saw a penny lying about in that house full of gold. He had learned that morning from the gossip on the quay that some vessels were being fitted out at Nantes, and that in consequence gold was so scarce there that it was worth double its ordinary value, and speculators were buying it in Angers. The old cooper, by the simple device of borrowing his tenants' horses, was prepared to sell his gold at Angers, receiving in return an order upon the Treasury from the Receiver-General for the sum destined for the purchase of his consols, and an addition in the shape of the premium paid on his gold.

"My father is going out," said Eugénie to herself. She had heard all that had passed from the head of the staircase.

Silence reigned once more in the house. The rattle of the wheels in the streets of sleeping Saumur grew more and more distant, and at last died away. Then it was that a sound



THE DOOR STOOD AJAR; SHE THRUST IT OPEN

seemed to reach Eugénie's heart before it fell on her ears, a wailing sound that rang through the thin walls above—it came from her cousin's room. There was a thin line of light, scarcely wider than a knife edge, beneath his door; the rays slanted through the darkness and left a bright gleaming bar along the balusters of the crazy staircase.

"He is unhappy," she said, as she went up a little farther.

A second moan brought her to the landing above. The door stood ajar; she thrust it open. Charles was sleeping in the rickety old armchair, his head drooped over to one side, his hand hung down and nearly touched the floor, the pen that he had let fall lay beneath his fingers. Lying in this position, his breath came in quick, sharp jerks that startled Eugénie. She entered hastily.

"He must be very tired," she said to herself, as she saw a dozen sealed letters lying on the table. She read the addresses —*MM. Farry, Breilman and Co., carriage builders; M. Buisson, tailor;* and so forth.

"Of course, he has been settling his affairs, so that he may leave France as soon as possible," she thought.

Her eyes fell upon two unsealed letters. One of them began—"My dear Annette"—— She felt dazed, and could see nothing for a moment. Her heart beat fast, her feet seemed glued to the floor.

"*His dear Annette!* He loves, he is beloved!—— Then there is no more hope!—— What does he say to her?" These thoughts flashed through her heart and brain. She read the words everywhere: on the walls, on the very floor, in letters of fire.

"Must I give him up already? No, I will not read the letter. I ought not to stay—— And yet, even if I did read it?"

She looked at Charles, gently took his head in her hands, and propped it against the back of the chair. He submitted like a child, who even while he is sleeping knows that it

is his mother who is bending over him, and, without waking, feels his mother's kisses. Like a mother, Eugénie raised the drooping hand, and, like a mother, laid a soft kiss on his hair. "*Dear Annette!*" A mocking voice shrieked the words in her ear.

"I know that perhaps I may be doing wrong, but I will read that letter," she said.

Eugénie turned her eyes away; her high sense of honor reproached her. For the first time in her life there was a struggle between good and evil in her soul. Hitherto she had never done anything for which she needed to blush. Love and curiosity silenced her scruples. Her heart swelled higher with every phrase as she read; her quickened pulses seemed to send a sharp, tingling glow through her veins, and to heighten the vivid emotions of her first love.

"My dear Annette: — Nothing should have power to separate us save this overwhelming calamity that has befallen me, a calamity that no human foresight could have predicted. My father has died by his own hand; his fortune and mine are both irretrievably lost. I am left an orphan at an age when, with the kind of education I have received, I am almost a child; and, nevertheless, I must now endeavor to show myself a man, and to rise from the dark depths into which I have been hurled. I have been spending part of my time to-night in revolving plans for my future. If I am to leave France as an honest man, as of course I mean to do, I have not a hundred francs that I can call my own with which to tempt fate in the Indies or in America. Yes, my poor Anna, I am going in quest of fortune to the most deadly foreign climes. Beneath such skies, they say, fortunes are rapidly and surely made. As for living on in Paris, I could not bring myself to do it. I could not face the coldness, the contempt, and the affronts that a ruined man, the son of a bankrupt, is sure

to receive. Great heaven! to owe two millions!—— I should fall in a duel before a week had passed. So I shall not return to Paris. Your love—the tenderest, the most devoted love that ever ennobled the heart of man—would not seek to draw me back. Alas! my darling, I have not money enough to take me to you, that I might give and receive one last kiss, a kiss that should put strength into me for the task that lies before me——"

"Poor Charles, I did well to read this. I have money, and he shall have it," said Eugénie. She went on with the letter when her tears permitted her to see.

"I have not even begun to think of the hardships of poverty. Supposing that I find I have the hundred louis to pay for my passage out, I have not a sou to lay out on a trading venture. Yet, no; I shall not have a hundred louis, nor yet a hundred sous; I have no idea whether anything will be left when I have settled all my debts in Paris. If there is nothing, I shall simply go to Nantes and work my passage out. I will begin at the bottom of the ladder, like many another man of energy who has gone out to the Indies as a penniless youth, to return thence a rich man. This morning I began to look my future steadily in the face. It is far harder for me than for others; I have been the petted child of a mother who idolized me, indulged by the best and kindest of fathers; and at my very entrance into the world I met with the love of an Anna. As yet I have only known the primrose paths of life; such happiness could not last. Yet, dear Annette, I have more fortitude than could be looked for from a thoughtless youth; above all, from a young man thus lapped round in happiness from the cradle, spoiled and flattered by the most delightful woman in Paris, the darling of fortune, whose wishes were as law to a father who—— Oh! my father! He is dead, Annette! Well, I have thought seriously over my

position, and I have likewise thought over yours. I have grown much older in the last twenty-four hours. Dear Anna, even if, to keep me beside you, you were to give up all the luxuries that you enjoy, your box at the opera, and your toilet, we should not have nearly sufficient for the necessary expenses of the extravagant life that I am accustomed to; and, besides, I could not think of allowing you to make such sacrifices for me. To-day, therefore, we part forever."

"Then this is to take leave of her! Holy Virgin! what happiness!"

Eugénie started and trembled for joy. Charles stirred in his chair, and Eugénie felt a chill of dread. Luckily, however, he did not awaken. She went on reading.

"When shall I come back? I cannot tell. Europeans grow old before their time in those tropical countries, especially Europeans who work hard. Let us look forward and try to see ourselves in ten years' time. In ten years from now your little girl will be eighteen years old; she will be your constant companion; that is, she will be a spy upon you. If the world will judge you very harshly, your daughter will probably judge more harshly still; such ingratitude on a young girl's part is common enough, and we know how the world regards these things. Let us take warning and be wise. Only keep the memory of those four years of happiness in the depths of your soul, as I shall keep them buried in mine; and be faithful, if you can, to your poor friend. I shall not be too exacting, dear Annette; for, as you can see, I must submit to my altered lot; I am compelled to look at life in a business-like way, and to base my calculations on dull, prosaic fact. So I ought to think of marriage as a necessary step in my new existence; and I will confess to you that here, in my uncle's house in Saumur, there is a cousin whose manners, face, character, and heart you would approve; and who, moreover, has, it appears——"

"How tired he must have been to break off like this when he was writing to *her!*" said Eugénie to herself, as the letter ended abruptly in the middle of a sentence. She was ready with excuses for him.

How was it possible that an inexperienced girl should discover the coldness and selfishness of this letter? For young girls, religiously brought up as she had been, are innocent and unsuspecting, and can see nothing but love when they have set foot in love's enchanted kingdom. It is as if a light from heaven shone in their own souls, shedding its beams upon their path; their lover shines transfigured before them in reflected glory, radiant with fair colors from love's magic fires, and endowed with noble thoughts which perhaps in truth are none of his. Women's errors spring, for the most part, from a belief in goodness, and a confidence in truth. In Eugénie's heart the words, "My dear Annette—my beloved," echoed like the fairest language of love; they stirred her soul like organ music—like the divine notes of the *Venite adoremus* falling upon her ears in childhood.

Surely the tears, not dry even yet upon her cousin's eyelids, betokened the innate nobility of nature that never fails to attract a young girl. How could she know that Charles' love and grief for his father, albeit genuine, was due rather to the fact that his father had loved him than to a deeply-rooted affection on his own part for his father? M. and Mme. Guillaume Grandet had indulged their son's every whim; every pleasure that wealth could bestow had been his; and thus it followed that he had never been tempted to make the hideous calculations that are only too common among the younger members of a family in Paris, when they see around them all the delights of Parisian life, and reflect with disgust that, so long as their parents are alive, all these enjoyments are not for them. The strange result of the father's lavish kindness had been a strong affection on the part of his son, an affection unalloyed by any after-thought. But, for all that, Charles was

a thorough child of Paris, with the Parisian's habit of mind; Annette herself had impressed upon him the importance of thinking out all the consequences of every step; he was not youthful, despite the mask of youth.

He had received the detestable education of a world in which more crimes (in thought and word at least) are committed in one evening than come before a court of justice in the course of a whole session; a world in which great ideas perish, done to death by a witticism, and where it is reckoned a weakness not to see things as they are. To see things as they are—that means, believe in nothing, put faith in nothing and in no man, for there is no such thing as sincerity in opinion or affection; mistrust events, for even events at times have been known to be manufactured. To see things as they are you must weigh your friend's purse morning by morning; you must know by instinct the right moment to interfere for your own profit in every matter that turns up; you must keep your judgment rigorously suspended, be in no hurry to admire a work of art or a noble deed, and give every one credit for interested motives on every possible occasion.

After many follies, the great lady, the fair Annette, compelled Charles to think seriously; she talked to him of his future, passing a fragrant hand through his hair, and imparted counsel to him on the art of getting on in the world, while she twisted a stray curl about her fingers. She had made him effeminate, and now she set herself to make a materialist of him, a twofold work of demoralization, a corruption none the less deadly because it never offended against the canons of good society, good manners, and good taste.

"You are a simpleton, Charles," she would say; "I see that it will be no easy task to teach you the ways of the world. You were very naughty about M. des Lupeaulx. Oh! he is not over-fastidious, I grant you, but you should wait until he falls from power, and then you may despise him as much as you like. Do you know what Mme. Campan used to

say to us? 'My children, so long as a man is a Minister, adore him; if he falls, help to drag him to the shambles. He is a kind of deity so long as he is in power, but after he is fallen and ruined he is viler than Marat himself, for he is still alive, while Marat is dead and out of sight. Life is nothing but a series of combinations, which must be studied and followed very carefully if a good position is to be successfully maintained.'"

Charles had no very exalted aims; he was too much of a worldling; he had been too much spoiled by his father and mother, too much flattered by the society in which he moved, to be stirred by any lofty enthusiasm. In the clay of his nature there was a grain of gold, due to his mother's teaching; but it had been passed through the Parisian draw-plate, and beaten out into a thin surface gilding which must soon be worn away by contact with the world.

At this time Charles, however, was only one-and-twenty, and it is taken for granted that freshness of heart accompanies the freshness of youth; it seems so unlikely that the mind within should be at variance with the young face, and the young voice, and the candid glance. Even the hardest judge, the most sceptical attorney, the flintiest-hearted money-lender will hesitate to believe that a wizened heart and a warped and corrupted nature can dwell beneath a young exterior, when the forehead is smooth and tears come so readily to the eyes. Hitherto Charles had never had occasion to put his Parisian maxims in practice; his character had not been tried, and consequently had not been found wanting; but, all unknown to him, egoism had taken deep root in his nature. The seeds of this baneful political economy had been sown in his heart; it was only a question of time, they would spring up and flower so soon as the soil was stirred, as soon as he ceased to be an idle spectator and became an actor in the drama of real life.

A young girl is nearly always ready to believe unques-

tioningly in the promise of a fair exterior; but even if Eugénie had been as keenly observant and as cautious as girls in the provinces sometimes are, how could she have brought herself to mistrust her cousin, when all he did and said, and everything about him, seemed to be the spontaneous outcome of a noble nature? This was the last outburst of real feeling, the last reproachful sigh of conscience in Charles' life; fate had thrown them together at that moment, and, unfortunately for her, all her sympathies had been aroused for him.

So she laid down the letter that seemed to her so full of love, and gave herself up to the pleasure of watching her sleeping cousin; the dreams and hopes of youth seemed to hover over his face, and then and there she vowed to herself that she would love him always. She glanced over the other letter; there could be no harm in reading it, she thought; she should only receive fresh proofs of the noble qualities with which, womanlike, she had invested the man whom she had idealized.

"My dear Alphonse," so it began, "by the time this letter is in your hands I shall have no friends left; but I will confess that though I put no faith in the worldly-minded people who use the word so freely, I have no doubts of your friendship for me. So I am commissioning you to settle some matters of business. I look to you to do the best you can for me in this, for all I have in the world is involved in it. By this time you must know how I am situated. I have nothing, and have made up my mind to go out to the Indies. I have just written to all the people to whom any money is owing, and the enclosed list is as accurate as I can make it from memory. I think the sale of my books, furniture, carriages, horses, and so forth ought to bring in sufficient to pay my debts. I only mean to keep back a few trinkets of little value, which will go some way towards a trading venture. I will send you a power of attorney in due form for this sale,

my dear Alphonse, in case any difficulty should arise. You might send my guns and everything of that sort to me here. And you must take 'Briton;' no one would ever give me anything like as much as the splendid animal is worth; I would rather give him to you, you must regard him as the mourning ring which a dying man leaves in his will to his executor. Farry, Breilman and Co. have been building a very comfortable traveling carriage for me, but they have not sent it home yet; get them to keep it if you can, and if they decline to have it left on their hands, make the best arrangement you can for me, and do all you can to save my honor in the position in which I am placed. I lost six louis at play to that fellow from the British Isles, mind that he is——"

"Dear cousin," murmured Eugénie, letting the sheet fall, and, seizing one of the lighted candles, she hastened on tiptoe to her own room.

Once there, it was not without a keen feeling of pleasure that she opened one of the drawers in an old oak chest—a most beautiful specimen of the skill of the craftsmen of the Renaissance, you could still make out the half-effaced royal salamander upon it. From this drawer she took a large red velvet money-bag, with gold tassels, and the remains of a golden fringe about it, a bit of faded splendor that had belonged to her grandmother. In the pride of her heart she felt its weight, and joyously set to work to reckon up the value of her little hoard, sorting out the different coins. *Imprimis*, twenty Portuguese moidores, as new and fresh as when they were struck in 1725, in the reign of John V.; each was nominally worth five lisbonines, or a hundred and sixty-five francs, but actually they were worth a hundred and eighty francs (so her father used to tell her), a fancy value on account of the rarity and beauty of the aforesaid coins, which shone like the sun. *Item*, five genovines, rare Genoese coins of a hundred livres each, their current value was perhaps about eighty francs, but

collectors would give a hundred for them. These had come to her from old M. de la Bertellière. *Item*, three Spanish quadruples of the time of Philip V., bearing the date 1729. Mme. Gentillet had given them to her, one by one, always with the same little speech: "There's a little yellow bird, there's a buttercup for you, worth ninety-eight livres! Take great care of it, darling; it will be the flower of your flock." *Item* (and those were the coins that her father thought most of, for the gold was a fraction over the twenty-three carats), a hundred Dutch ducats, struck at the Hague in 1756, and each worth about thirteen francs. *Item*, a great curiosity!—— a few coins dear to a miser's heart, three rupees bearing the sign of the Balance, and five with the sign of the Virgin stamped upon them, all pure gold of twenty-four carats—the magnificent coins of the Great Mogul. The weight of metal in them alone was worth thirty-seven francs forty centimes, but amateurs who love to finger gold would give fifty francs for such coins as those. *Item*, the double napoleon that had been given to her the day before, and which she had carelessly slipped into the red velvet bag.

There were new gold-pieces fresh from the mint among her treasures, real works of art, which old Grandet liked to look at from time to time, so that he might count them over and tell his daughter of their intrinsic value, expatiating also upon the beauty of the bordering, the sparkling field, the ornate lettering with its sharp, clean, flawless outlines. But now she gave not a thought to their beauty and rarity; her father's mania and the risks she ran by despoiling herself of a hoard so precious in his eyes were all forgotten. She thought of nothing but her cousin, and managed at last to discover, after many mistakes in calculation, that she was the owner of eighteen hundred francs all told, or of nearly two thousand francs if the coins were sold for their actual value as curiosities.

She clapped her hands in exultation at the sight of her riches, like a child who is compelled to find some outlet for

his overflowing glee and dances for joy. Father and daughter had both counted their wealth that night; he in order to sell his gold, she that she might cast it abroad on the waters of love. She put the money back into the old purse, took it up, and went upstairs with it without a moment's hesitation. Her cousin's distress was the one thought in her mind; she did not even remember that it was night, conventionalities were utterly forgotten; her conscience did not reproach her, she was strong in her happiness and her love.

As she stood upon the threshold with the candle in one hand and the velvet bag in the other, Charles awoke, saw his cousin, and was struck dumb with astonishment. Eugénie came forward, set the light on the table, and said with an unsteady voice:

"Cousin Charles, I have to ask your forgiveness for something I have done; it was very wrong, but if you will overlook it, God will forgive me."

"What can it be?" asked Charles, rubbing his eyes.

"I have been reading those two letters."

Charles reddened.

"Do you ask how I came to do it?" she went on, "and why I came up here? Indeed, I do not know now; and I am almost tempted to feel glad that I read the letters, for through reading them I have come to know your heart, your soul, and——"

"And what?" asked Charles.

"And your plans—the difficulty that you are in for want of money——"

"My *dear* cousin——"

"Hush! hush! do not speak so loud, do not let us wake anybody. Here are the savings of a poor girl who has no wants," she went on, opening the purse. "You must take them, Charles. This morning I did not know what money was; you have taught me that it is simply a means to an end, that is all. A cousin is almost a brother; surely you may borrow from your sister."

Eugénie, almost as much a woman as a girl, had not foreseen a refusal, but her cousin was silent..

"Why, are you going to refuse me?" asked Eugénie. The silence was so deep that the beating of her heart was audible. Her pride was wounded by her cousin's hesitation, but the thought of his dire need came vividly before her, and she fell on her knees.

"I will not rise," she said, "until you have taken that money. Oh! cousin, say something, for pity's sake!——so that I may know that you respect me, that you are generous, that——"

This cry, wrung from her by a noble despair, brought tears to Charles' eyes; he would not let her kneel, she felt his hot tears on her hands, and sprang to her purse, which she emptied out upon the table.

"Well, then, it is 'Yes,' is it not?" she said, crying for joy. "Do not scruple to take it, cousin; you will be quite rich. That gold will bring you luck, you know. Some day you shall pay it back to me, or, if you like, we will be partners; I will submit to any conditions that you may impose. But you ought not to make so much of this gift."

Charles found words at last.

"Yes, Eugénie, I should have a little soul indeed if I would not take it. But nothing for nothing, confidence for confidence."

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled.

"Listen, dear cousin, I have there——"

He interrupted himself for a moment to show her a square box in a leather case, which stood on the chest of drawers.

"There is something there that is dearer to me than life. That box was a present from my mother. Since this morning I have thought that if she could rise from her tomb she herself would sell the gold that in her tenderness she lavished on this dressing-case, but I cannot do it—it would seem like sacrilege.

Eugénie grasped her cousin's hand tightly in hers at these last words.

"No," he went on after a brief pause, during which they looked at each other with tearful eyes, "I do not want to pull it to pieces, nor to risk taking it with me on my wanderings. I will leave it in your keeping, dear Eugénie. Never did one friend confide a more sacred trust to another; but you shall judge for yourself."

He drew the box from its leather case, opened it, and displayed before his cousin's astonished eyes a dressing-case resplendent with gold—the curious skill of the craftsman had only added to the value of the metal.

"All that you are admiring is nothing," he said, pressing the spring of a secret drawer. "There is something which is worth more than all the world to me," he added sadly.

He took out two portraits, two of Mme. de Mirbel's masterpieces, handsomely set in pearls.

"How lovely she is! Is not this the lady to whom you were writing?"

"No," he said, with a little smile; "that is my mother, and this is my father—your aunt and uncle. Eugénie, I could beg and pray of you on my knees to keep this treasure safe for me. If I should die, and lose your little fortune, the gold will make good your loss; and to you alone can I leave those two portraits, for you alone are worthy to take charge of them, but do not let them pass into any other hands, rather destroy them——"

Eugénie was silent.

"Well, 'it is *Yes*, is it not?'" he said, and there was a winning charm in his manner.

As the last words were spoken, she gave him for the first time such a glance as a loving woman can, a bright glance that reveals a depth of feeling within her. He took her hand and kissed it.

"Angel of purity! what is money henceforward between

us two? It is nothing, is it not? but the feeling, which alone gave it worth, will be everything."

"You are like your mother. Was her voice as musical as yours, I wonder?"

"Oh! far more sweet——"

"Yes, for you," she said, lowering her eyelids. "Come, Charles, you must go to bed; I wish it. You are very tired. Good-night."

Her cousin had caught her hand in both of his; she drew it gently away, and went down to her room, her cousin lighting the way. In the doorway of her room they both paused.

"Oh! why am I a ruined man?" he said.

"Pshaw! my father is rich, I believe," she returned.

"My poor child," said Charles, as he set one foot in her room, and propped himself against the wall by the doorway, "if your father had been rich, he would not have left my father die, and you would not be lodged in such a poor place as this; he would live altogether in quite a different style."

"But he has Froidfond."

"And what may Froidfond be worth?"

"I do not know; but there is Noyers too."

"Some miserable farmhouse!"

"He has vineyards and meadows——"

"They are not worth talking about," said Charles scornfully. "If your father had even twenty-four thousand livres a year, do you suppose that you would sleep in a bare, cold room like this?" he added, as he made a step forward with his left foot. "That is where my treasures will be," he went on, nodding towards the old chest, a device by which he tried to conceal his thoughts from her.

"Go," she said, "and try to sleep," and she barred his entrance into an untidy room. Charles drew back; and the cousins bade each other a smiling good-night.

They fell asleep, to dream the same dream; and from that time forward Charles found that there were still roses to be

gathered in the world in spite of his mourning. The next morning Mme. Grandet saw her daughter walking with Charles before breakfast. He was still sad and subdued; how, indeed, should he be otherwise than sad? He had been brought very low in his distress; he was gradually finding out how deep the abyss was into which he had fallen, and the thought of the future weighed heavily upon him.

"My father will not be back before dinner," said Eugénie, in reply to an anxious look in her mother's eyes.

The tones of Eugénie's voice had grown strangely sweet; it was easy to see from her face and manner that the cousins had some thought in common. Their souls had rushed together, while perhaps as yet they scarcely knew the power or the nature of this force which was binding them to each other.

Charles sat in the dining-room; no one intruded upon his sorrow. Indeed, the three women had plenty to do. Grandet had gone without any warning, and his work-people were at a standstill. The slater came, the plumber, the bricklayer, and the carpenter followed; so did laborers, tenants, and vine-dressers, some came to pay their dues, and others to receive them, and yet others to make bargains for the repairs which were being done. Mme. Grandet and Eugénie, therefore, were continually going and coming; they had to listen to interminable histories from laborers and country people.

Everything that came into the house Nanon promptly and securely stowed away in her kitchen. She always waited for her master's instructions as to what should be kept, and what should be sold in the market. The worthy cooper, like many little country squires, was wont to drink his worst wine, and to reserve his spoiled or wind-fallen orchard fruit for home consumption.

Towards five o'clock that evening Grandet came back from Angers. He had made fourteen thousand francs on his gold, and carried a government certificate bearing interest until the day when it should be transferred into *rentes*. He had left

Cornoiller also in Angers to look after the horses, which had been nearly foundered by the night journey, and had given instructions to bring them back leisurely after they had had a thorough rest.

"I have been to Angers, wife," he said; "and I am hungry."

"Have you had nothing to eat since yesterday?" called Nanon from her kitchen.

"Nothing whatever," said the worthy man.

Nanon brought in the soup. Des Grassins came to take his client's instructions just as the family were sitting down to dinner. Grandet had not so much as seen his nephew all this time.

"Go on with your dinner, Grandet," said the banker. "We can have a little chat. Have you heard what gold is fetching in Angers, and that people from Nantes are buying it there? I am going to send some over."

"You need not trouble yourself," answered his worthy client; "they have quite enough there by this time. I don't like you to lose your labor when I can prevent it; we are too good friends for that."

"But gold is at thirteen francs fifty centimes premium."

"Say *was* at a premium."

"How the deuce did you get to know that?"

"I went over to Angers myself last night," Grandet told him in a low voice.

The banker started, and a whispered conversation followed; both des Grassins and Grandet looked at Charles from time to time, and once more a gesture of surprise escaped the banker, doubtless at the point when the old cooper commissioned him to purchase *rentes* to bring in a hundred thousand livres.

"M. Grandet," said des Grassins, addressing Charles, "I am going to Paris, and if there is anything I can do for you——"

"Thank you, sir, there is nothing," Charles replied.

"You must thank him more heartily than that, nephew. This gentleman is going to wind up your father's business and settle with his creditors."

"Then is there any hope of coming to an arrangement?" asked Charles.

"Why, are you not my nephew?" cried the cooper, with a fine assumption of pride. "Our honor is involved; is not your name Grandet?"

Charles rose from his chair, impulsively flung his arms about his uncle, turned pale, and left the room. Eugénie looked at her father with affection and pride in her eyes.

"Well, let us say good-bye, my good friend," said Grandet. "I am very much at your service. Try to get round those fellows over yonder."

The two diplomatists shook hands, and the cooper went to the door with his neighbor; he came back to the room again when he had closed the door on des Grassins, flung himself down in his easy-chair, and said to Nanon: "Bring me some cordial."

But he was too much excited to keep still; he rose and looked at old M. de la Bertellière's portrait, and began to "dance a jig," in Nanon's phrase, singing to himself—

> "Once in the *Gardes françaises*
> I had a grandpapa——"

Nanon, Mme. Grandet, and Eugénie all looked at each other in silent dismay. The vine-grower's ecstasies never boded any good.

The evening was soon over. Old Grandet went off early to bed, and no one was allowed to stay up after that; when he slept, every one else must likewise sleep, much as in Poland, in the days of Augustus the Strong, whenever the king drank all his subjects were loyally tipsy. Wherefore, Nanon, Charles, and Eugénie were no less tired than the master of

the house; and as for Mme. Grandet, she slept or woke, ate or drank, as her husband bade her. Yet during the two hours allotted to the digestion of his dinner the cooper was more facetious than he had ever been in his life before, and uttered not a few of his favorite aphorisms; one example will serve to plumb the depths of the cooper's mind. When he had finished his cordial, he looked pensively at the glass, and thus delivered himself—

"You have no sooner set your lips to a glass than it is empty! Such is life. You cannot have your cake and eat it too, and you can't turn over your money and keep it in your purse; if you could only do that, life would be too glorious."

He was not only jocose, he was good-natured, so that when Nanon came in with her spinning-wheel—"You must be tired," he said; "let the hemp alone."

"And if I did," the servant answered," why, I should have to sit with my hands before me."

"Poor Nanon! would you like some cordial?"

"Cordial? Oh! I don't say no. Madame makes it much better than the apothecaries do. The stuff they sell is like physic."

"They spoil the flavor with putting too much sugar in it," said the good man.

The next morning, at the eight o'clock breakfast, the party seemed, for the first time, almost like one family. Mme. Grandet, Eugénie, and Charles had been drawn together by these troubles, and Nanon herself unconsciously felt with them. As for the old vine-grower, he scarcely noticed his nephew's presence in the house, his greed for gold had been satisfied, and he was very shortly to be quit of this young sprig by the cheap and easy expedient of paying his nephew's traveling expenses as far as Nantes.

Charles and Eugénie meanwhile were free to do what seemed to them good. They were under Mme. Grandet's eyes, and

Grandet reposed complete faith in his wife in all matters of conduct and religion. Moreover, he had other things to think of; his meadows were to be drained, and a row of poplars was to be planted along the Loire, and there was all the ordinary winter work at Froidfond and elsewhere; in fact, he was exceedingly busy.

And now began the springtime of love for Eugénie. Since that hour in the night when she had given her gold to her cousin, her heart had followed the gift. They shared a secret between them; they were conscious of this understanding whenever they looked at each other; and this knowledge, that brought them more and more closely together, drew them in a manner out of the current of every-day life. And did not relationship justify a certain tenderness in the voice and kindness in the eyes? Eugénie therefore quietly set herself to work to make her cousin forget his grief in the childish joys of growing love.

For the beginnings of love and the beginnings of life are not unlike. Is not the child soothed by smiles and cradle-songs, and fairy tales of a golden future that lies before him? Above him, too, the bright wings of hope are always spread, and does he not shed tears of joy or of sorrow, wax petulant over trifles and quarrelsome over the pebbles with which he builds a tottering palace, or the flowers that are no sooner gathered than forgotten? Is he not also eager to outstrip time, and to live in the future? Love is the soul's second transformation.

Love and childhood were almost the same thing for Charles and Eugénie; the dawn of love and its childish beginnings were all the sweeter because their hearts were full of gloom; and this love, that from its birth had been enveloped in crape, was in keeping with their homely surroundings in the melancholy old house. As the cousins interchanged a few words by the well in the silent courtyard, or sat out in the little garden towards sunset time, wholly absorbed by the moment-

ous nothings that each said to each, or wrapped in the stillness that always brooded over the space between the ramparts and the house, Charles learned to think of love as something sacred. Hitherto, with his great lady, his "dear Annette," he had experienced little but its perils and storms; but that episode in Paris was over, with its coquetry and passion, its vanity and emptiness, and he turned to this love in its purity and truth.

He came to feel a certain fondness for the old house, and their way of life no longer seemed absurd to him. He would come downstairs early in the morning so as to snatch a few words with Eugénie before her father gave out the stores; and when the sound of Grandet's heavy footstep echoed on the staircase, he fled into the garden. Even Eugénie's mother did not know of this morning tryst of theirs, and Nanon made as though she did not see it; it was a small piece of audacity that gave the keen relish of a stolen pleasure to their innocent love. Then when breakfast was over, and the elder Grandet had gone to see after his business and his improvements, Charles sat in the gray parlor between the mother and daughter, finding a pleasure unknown before in holding skeins of thread for them to wind, in listening to their talk, and watching them sew. There was something that appealed to him strongly in the almost monastic simplicity of the life, which had led him to discover the nobleness of the natures of these two unworldly women. He had not believed that such lives as these were possible in France; in Germany he admitted that old-world manners lingered still, but in France they were only to be found in fiction and in Auguste Lafontaine's novels. It was not long before Eugénie became an embodiment of his ideal, Goethe's Marguerite without her error.

Day after day, in short, the poor girl hung on his words and looks, and drifted farther along the stream of love. He snatched at every happiness as some swimmer might catch at

an overhanging willow branch, that so he might reach the bank and rest there for a little while.

Was not the time of parting very near now? The shadow of that parting seemed to fall across the brightest hours of those days that fled so fast; and not one of them went by but something happened to remind her how soon it would be upon them.

For instance, three days after des Grassins had started for Paris, Grandet had taken Charles before a magistrate with the funereal solemnity with which such acts are performed by provincials, and in the presence of that functionary the young man had had to sign a declaration that he renounced all claim to his father's property. Dreadful repudiation! An impiety amounting to apostasy! He went to M. Cruchot to procure two powers of attorney, one for des Grassins, the other for the friend who was commissioned to sell his own personal effects. There were also some necessary formalities in connection with his passport; and finally, on the arrival of the plain suit of mourning which Charles had ordered from Paris, he sent for a clothier in Saumur, and disposed of his now useless wardrobe. This transaction was peculiarly pleasing to old Grandet.

"Ah! *Now* you look like a man who is ready to set out, and means to make his way in the world," he said, as he saw his nephew in a plain, black overcoat of rough cloth. "Good, very good!"

"I beg you to believe, sir," Charles replied, "that I shall face my position with proper spirit."

"What does this mean?" asked his worthy relative; there was an eager look in the good man's eyes at the sight of a handful of gold which Charles held out to him.

"I have gathered together my studs and rings and everything of any value that I have; I am not likely to want them now; but I know of nobody in Saumur, and this morning I thought I would ask you——"

"To buy it?" Grandet broke in upon him.

"No, uncle, to give me the name of some honest man who——"

"Give it to me, nephew; I will take it up stairs and find out what it is worth, and let you know the value to a centime. Jeweler's gold," he commented, after an examination of a long chain, "jeweler's gold, eighteen to nineteen carats, I should say."

The worthy soul held out his huge hand for it, and carried off the whole collection.

"Cousin Eugénie," said Charles, "permit me to offer you these two clasps; you might use them to fasten ribbons round your wrists, that sort of bracelet is all the rage just now."

"I do not hesitate to take it; cousin," she said, with a look of intelligence.

"And, aunt, this is my mother's thimble; I have treasured it up till now in my dressing-case," and he gave a pretty gold thimble to Mme. Grandet, who for the past ten years had longed for one.

"It is impossible to thank you in words, dear nephew," said the old mother, as her eyes filled with tears. "But morning and evening I shall repeat the prayer for travelers, and pray most fervently for you. If anything should happen to me, Eugénie shall take care of it for you."

"It is worth nine hundred and eighty-nine francs seventy-five centimes, nephew," said Grandet, as he came in at the door. "But to save you the trouble of selling it, I will let you have the money in livres."

This expression "in livres" means, in the districts along the Loire, that a crown of six livres is to be considered worth six francs, without deduction.

"I did not venture to suggest such a thing," Charles answered, "but I shrank from hawking my trinkets about in the town where you are living. Dirty linen ought not to be washed in public, as Napoleon used to say. Thank you for obliging me."

Grandet scratched his ear, and there was a moment's silence in the room.

"And, dear uncle," Charles went on, somewhat nervously, and as though he feared to wound his uncle's susceptibilities, "my cousin and aunt have consented to receive trifling mementoes from me; will you not in your turn accept these sleeve-links, which are useless to me now; they may perhaps recall to your memory a poor boy, in a far-off country, whose thoughts will certainly often turn to those who are all that remain to him now of his family."

"Oh! my boy, my boy, you must not strip yourself like that for us——"

"What have you there, wife?" said the cooper, turning eagerly towards her. "Ah! a gold thimble? And you, little girl? Diamond clasps; what next! Come, I will accept your studs, my boy," he continued, squeezing Charles' hand. "But——you must let me pay——your——yes, your passage out to the Indies. Yes, I mean to pay your passage. Besides, my boy, when I estimated your jewelry I only took it at its value as metal, you see, without reckoning the workmanship, and it may be worth a trifle more on that account. So that is settled. I will pay you fifteen hundred francs——in livres; Cruchot will lend it me, for I have not a brass farthing in the house; unless Perrotet, who is getting behindhand with his dues, will pay me in coin. There! there! I will go and see about it," and he took up his hat, put on his gloves, and went forthwith.

"Then you are going?" said Eugénie, with sad, admiring eyes.

"I cannot help myself," he answered, with his head bent down.

For several days Charles looked, spoke, and behaved like a man who is in deep trouble, but who feels the weight of such heavy obligations, that his misfortunes only brace him for greater effort. He had ceased to pity himself; he had become

a man. Never had Eugénie augured better of her cousin's character than she did on the day when she watched him come downstairs in his plain, black mourning suit, which set off his pale, sad face to such advantage. The two women had also gone into mourning, and went with Charles to the *requiem* mass celebrated in the parish church for the soul of the late Guillaume Grandet.

Charles received letters from Paris as they took the mid-day meal; he opened and read them.

"Well, cousin," said Eugénie, in a low voice, "are your affairs going on satisfactorily?"

"Never put questions of that sort, my girl," remarked Grandet. "I never talk to you about my affairs, and why the devil should you meddle in your cousin's? Just let the boy alone."

"Oh! my dear uncle, I have no secrets of any sort," said Charles.

"Tut, tut, tut. You will find out that you must bridle your tongue in business, nephew."

When the two lovers were alone in the garden, Charles drew Eugénie to the old bench under the walnut tree where they so often sat of late.

"I felt sure of Alphonse, and I was right," he said; "he has done wonders, and has settled my affairs prudently and loyally. All my debts in Paris are paid, my furniture sold well, and he tells me that he has acted on the advice of an old sea captain who had made the voyage to the Indies, and has invested the surplus money in ornaments and odds and ends for which there is a great demand out there. He has sent my packages to Nantes, where an East Indiaman is taking freight for Java, and so, Eugénie, in five days we must bid each other farewell, for a long while at any rate, and perhaps forever. My trading venture and the ten thousand francs which two of my friends have sent me are a very poor start; I cannot expect to return for many years. Dear cousin, let us not con-

sider ourselves bound in any way; I may die, and very likely some good opportunity for settling yourself——"

"You love me?" she asked.

"Oh! yes, indeed," he replied, with an earnestness of manner that betokened a like earnestness in his feelings.

"Then I will wait for you, Charles. *Dieu!* my father is looking out of his window," she exclaimed, evading her cousin, who had drawn closer to embrace her.

She fled to the archway; and seeing that Charles followed her thither, she retreated farther, flung back the folding door at the foot of the staircase, and with no very clear idea, save that of flight, she rushed towards the darkest corner of the passage, outside Nanon's sleeping hole; and there Charles, who was close beside her, grasped both hands in his and pressed her to his heart; his arms went round her waist, Eugénie resisted no longer, and leaning against her lover she received and gave the purest, sweetest, and most perfect of all kisses.

"Dear Eugénie, a cousin is better than a brother; he can marry you," said Charles.

"Amen, so be it!" cried Nanon, opening the door behind them, and emerging from her den. Her voice startled the two lovers, who fled into the dining-room, where Eugénie took up her sewing, and Charles seized on Mme. Grandet's prayer book, opened it at the litanies of the Virgin, and began to read industriously.

"Why!" said Nanon, "so we are all saying our prayers!"

As soon as Charles fixed the day for his departure, Grandet bustled about and affected to take the greatest interest in the whole matter. He was liberal with advice, and with anything else that cost him nothing, first seeking out a packer for Charles, and then, saying that the man wanted too much for his cases, setting to work with all his might to make them himself, using odd planks for the purpose. He was up be-

times every morning planing, fitting, nailing deal boards together, squaring and shaping; and, in fact, he made some strong cases, packed all Charles' property in them, and undertook to send them by steamer down the Loire to Nantes in time to go by the merchant ship, and to insure them during the voyage.

Since that kiss given and taken in the passage, the hours sped with terrible rapidity for Eugénie. At times she thought of following her cousin; for of all ties that bind one human being to another, this passion of love is the closest and strongest, and those who know this, and know how every day shortens love's allotted span, and how not time alone but age and mortal sickness and all the untoward accidents of life combine to menace it—these will know the agony that Eugénie suffered. She shed many tears as she walked up and down the little garden; it had grown so narrow for her now; the courtyard, the old house, and the town had all grown narrow, and her thoughts fared forth already across vast spaces of sea.

It was the day before the day of departure. That morning, while Grandet and Nanon were out of the house, the precious casket that held the two portraits was solemnly deposited in Eugénie's chest, beside the now empty velvet bag in the only drawer that could be locked, an installation which was not affected without many tears and kisses. When Eugénie locked the drawer and hid the key in her bosom, she had not the courage to forbid the kiss by which Charles sealed the act.

"The key shall always stay there, dear."

"Ah! well, my heart will always be there with it too."

"Oh! Charles, you should not say that," she said a little reproachfully.

"Are we not married?" he replied. "I have your word; take mine."

"Thine forever!" they said together, and repeated it a second time. No holier vow was ever made on earth; for

Charles' love had received a moment's consecration in the presence of Eugénie's simple sincerity.

It was a melancholy group round the breakfast-table next morning. Even Nanon herself, in spite of Charles' gift of a new gown and a gilt cross, had a tear in her eye; but she was free to express her feelings, and did so.

"Oh! that poor, delicate young gentleman who is going to sea," was the burden of her discourse.

At half-past ten the whole family left the house to see Charles start for Nantes in the diligence. Nanon had let the dog loose and locked the door, and meant to carry Charles' hand-bag. Every shopkeeper in the ancient street was in the doorway to watch the little procession pass. M. Cruchot joined them in the market-place.

"Eugénie," whispered her mother, "mind you do not cry!"

They reached the gateway of the inn, and there Grandet kissed Charles on both cheeks. "Well! nephew," he said, "set out poor and come back rich; you leave your father's honor in safe-keeping. I—Grandet—will answer to you for that; you will only have to do your part——"

"Oh! uncle, this sweetens the bitterness of parting. Is not this the greatest gift you could possibly give me?"

Charles had broken in upon the old cooper's remarks before he quite understood their drift; he put his arms round his uncle's neck, and let fall tears of gratitude on the vine-grower's sunburned cheeks; Eugénie clasped her cousin's hand in one of hers and her father's in the other, and held them tightly. Only the notary smiled to himself; he alone understood the worthy man, and he could not help admiring his astute cunning. The four Saumurois and a little group of onlookers hung about the diligence till the last moment; and looked after it until it disappeared across the bridge, and the sound of the wheels grew faint and distant.

"A good riddance!" said the cooper.

Luckily, no one but M. Cruchot heard this ejaculation;

Eugénie and her mother had walked along the quay to a point of view whence they could still see the diligence, and stood there waving their handkerchiefs and watching Charles' answering signal till he was out of sight; then Eugénie turned.

"Oh! mother, mother, if I had God's power for one moment," she said.

To save farther interruption to the course of the story, it is necessary to glance a little ahead, and give a brief account of the course of events in Paris, of Grandet's calculations, and the action taken by his worthy lieutenant the banker in the matter of Guillaume Grandet's affairs. A month after des Grassins had gone, Grandet received a certificate for a hundred thousand livres per annum of *rentes*, purchased at eighty francs. No information was ever forthcoming as to how and when the actual coin had been paid, or the receipt taken, which in due course had been exchanged for the certificate. The inventory and statement of his affairs which the miser left at his death threw no light upon the mystery, and Cruchot fancied that in some way or other Nanon must have been the unconscious instrument employed; for about that time the faithful serving-maid was away from home for four or five days, ostensibly to see after matters at Froidfond, as if its worthy owner were likely to forget anything there that required looking after! As for Guillaume Grandet's creditors, everything had happened as the cooper had intended and foreseen.

At the Bank of France (as everybody knows) they keep accurate lists of all the great fortunes in Paris or in the departments. The names of des Grassins and of Felix Grandet of Saumur were duly to be found inscribed therein; indeed, they shone conspicuous there as well-known names in the business world, as men who were not only financially sound, but owners of broad acres unencumbered by mortgages. And now it was said that des Grassins of Saumur had come to

Paris with intent to call a meeting of the creditors of the firm of Guillaume Grandet; the shade of the wine merchant was to be spared the disgrace of protested bills. The seals were broken in the presence of the creditors, and the family notary proceeded to make out an inventory in due form.

Before very long, in fact, des Grassins called a meeting of the creditors, who with one voice appointed the banker of Saumur as trustee conjointly with François Keller, the head of a large business house, and one of the principal creditors, empowering them to take such measures as they thought fit, in order to save the family name (and the bills) from being dishonored. The fact that des Grassins was acting as his agent produced a hopeful tone in the meeting, and things went smoothly from the first; the banker did not find a single dissentient voice. No one thought of passing his bill to his profit and loss account, and each one said to himself—

"Grandet of Saumur is going to pay!"

Six months went by. The Parisian merchants had withdrawn the bills from circulation, and had consigned them to the depths of their portfolios. The cooper had gained his first point. Nine months after the first meeting the two trustees paid the creditors a dividend of forty-seven per cent. This sum had been raised by the sale of the late Guillaume Grandet's property, goods, chattels and general effects; the most scrupulous integrity characterized these proceedings; indeed, the whole affair was conducted with the most conscientious honesty, and the delighted creditors fell to admiring Grandet's wonderful, indubitable, and high-minded probity. When these praises had duly circulated for a sufficient length of time, the creditors began to ask themselves when the remainder of their money would be forthcoming, and bethought them of collectively writing a letter to Grandet.

"Here we are!" was the old cooper's comment, as he flung the letter in the fire. "Patience, patience, my dear friends."

By way of a reply to the propositions contained in the letter, Grandet of Saumur required them to deposit with a notary all the bills and claims against the estate of his deceased brother, accompanying each with receipts for the payments already made. The accounts were to be audited, and the exact condition of affairs was to be ascertained. Innumerable difficulties were cleared away by this notion of the deposit.

A creditor, generally speaking, is a sort of maniac; there is no saying what a creditor will do. One day he is in a hurry to bring the thing to an end, the next he is all for fire and sword, a little later and he is sweetness and benignity itself. To-day, very probably, his wife is in a good humor, his youngest hope has just cut a tooth, everything is going on comfortably at home, he has no mind to abate his claims one jot; but to-morrow comes and it rains, and he cannot go out; he feels low in his mind, and agrees hastily to anything and everything that is likely to settle the affair; the next morning brings counsel; he requires a guarantee, and by the end of the month he talks about an execution, the inhuman, bloodthirsty wretch! The creditor is not unlike that common or house sparrow on whose tail small children are encouraged to try to put a grain of salt—a pleasing simile which a creditor may twist to his own uses, and apply to his bills, from which he fondly hopes to derive some benefit at last. Grandet had observed these atmospheric variations among creditors; and his forecasts in the present case were correct, his brother's creditors were behaving in every respect exactly as he wished. Some waxed wroth, and flatly declined to have anything to do with the deposit, or to give up the vouchers.

"Good!" said Grandet; "that is all right!" He rubbed his hands as he read the letters which des Grassins wrote to him on the subject.

Yet others refused to consent to the aforesaid deposit unless their position was clearly defined in the first place; it was to

be made without prejudice, and they reserved the right to declare the estate bankrupt should they deem it advisable. This opened a fresh correspondence, and occasioned a farther delay, after which Grandet finally agreed to all the conditions, and as a consequence the more tractable creditors brought the recalcitrant to hear reason, and the deposit was made, not, however, without some grumbling.

"That old fellow is laughing in his sleeve at you and us too," said they to des Grassins.

Twenty-three months after Guillaume Grandet's death, many of the merchants had forgotten all about their claims in the course of events in a business life in Paris, or they only thought of them to say to themselves—

"It begins to look as though the forty-seven per cent. is about all I shall get out of that business."

The cooper had reckoned on the aid of time, who, as he was wont to say, is a good fellow. By the end of the third year des Grassins wrote to Grandet saying that he had induced most of the creditors to give up their bills, and that the amount now owing was only about ten per cent. of the outstanding two million four hundred thousand francs. Grandet replied that there yet remained the notary and the stockbroker, whose failures had been the death of his brother; *they* were still alive. They might be solvent again by this time, and proceedings ought to be taken against them; something might be recovered in this way which would still farther reduce the sum-total of the deficit.

When the fourth year drew to a close the deficit had been duly brought down to the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs; the limit appeared to have been reached. Six months farther were spent in parleyings between the trustees and the creditors, and between Grandet and the trustees. In short, strong pressure being brought to bear upon Grandet of Saumur, he announced, somewhere about the ninth month of the same year, that his nephew, who had made a fortune in the East

Indies, had signified his intention of settling in full all claims on his father's estate; and that meantime he could not take it upon himself to act, nor to defraud the creditors by winding up the affair before he had consulted his nephew; he added that he had written to him, and was now awaiting an answer.

The middle of the fifth year had been reached, and still the creditors were held in check by the magic words *in full*, let fall judiciously from time to time by the sublime cooper, who was laughing at them in his sleeve; "those PARISIANS," he would say to himself, with a mild oath, and a cunning smile would steal across his features.

In fact, a martyrdom unknown to the calendars of commerce was in store for the creditors. When next they appear in the course of this story, they will be found in exactly the same position that they were in now when Grandet had done with them. Consols went up to a hundred and fifteen, old Grandet sold out, and received from Paris about two million four hundred thousand francs in gold, which went into his wooden kegs to keep company with the six hundred thousand francs of interest which his investment had brought in.

Des Grassins stayed on in Paris, and for the following reasons. In the first place, he had been appointed a deputy; and in the second, he, the father of a family, bored by the exceeding dulness of existence in Saumur, was smitten with the charms of Mlle. Florine, one of the prettiest actresses of the Théâtre de Madame, and there was a recrudescence of the quartermaster in the banker. It is useless to discuss his conduct; at Saumur it was pronounced to be profoundly immoral. It was very lucky for his wife that she had brains enough to carry on the concern at Saumur in her own name, and could extricate the remains of her fortune, which had suffered not a little from M. des Grassins' extravagance and folly. But the quasi-widow was in a false position, and the Cruchotins did all that in them lay to make matters worse; she had to give

up all hope of a match between her son and Eugénie Grandet, and married her daughter very badly. Adolphe des Grassins went to join his father in Paris, and there acquired, so it was said, an unenviable reputation. The triumph of the Cruchotins was complete.

"Your husband has taken leave of his senses," Grandet took occasion to remark as he accommodated Mme. des Grassins with a loan (on good security). "I am very sorry for you; you are a nice little woman."

"Ah!" sighed the poor lady, "who could have believed that day when he set out for Paris to see after that business of yours that he was hurrying to his own ruin?"

"Heaven is my witness, madame, that to the very last I did all I could to prevent him, and M. le Président was dying to go; but we know now why your husband was so set upon it."

Clearly, therefore, Grandet lay under no obligation to des Grassins.

In every situation a woman is bound to suffer in many ways that a man does not, and to feel her troubles more acutely than he can; for a man's vigor and energy are constantly brought into play; he acts and thinks, comes and goes, busies himself in the present, and looks to the future for consolation. This was what Charles was doing. But a woman cannot help herself—hers is a passive part; she is left face to face with her trouble, and has nothing to divert her mind from it; she sounds the depths of the abyss of sorrow, and its dark places are filled with her prayers and tears. So it was with Eugénie. She was beginning to understand that the web of a woman's life will always be woven of love and sorrow and hope and fear and self-sacrifice; hers was to be a woman's lot in all things without a woman's consolations, and her moments of happiness (to make use of Bossuet's wonderful illustration) were to be like

the scattered nails driven into the wall, when all collected together they scarcely filled the hollow of the hand. Troubles seldom keep us waiting for them, and for Eugénie they were gathering thick and fast.

The day after Charles had gone, the Grandet household fell back into the old ways of life; there was no difference for any one but Eugénie—for her the house had grown very empty all of a sudden. Charles' room should remain just as he had left it; Mme. Grandet and Nanon lent themselves to this whim of hers, willingly maintained the *statu quo*, and said nothing to her father.

"Who knows?" Eugénie said. "He may come back to us sooner than we think."

"Ah! I wish I could see him here again," replied Nanon. "I could get on with him well enough! He was very nice, and an excellent gentleman; and he was pretty-like, his hair curled over his head just like a girl's."

Eugénie gazed at Nanon.

"Holy Virgin! mademoiselle, with such eyes, you are like to lose your soul. You shouldn't look at people in that way."

From that day Mlle. Grandet's beauty took a new character. The grave thoughts of love that slowly enveloped her soul, the dignity of a woman who is beloved, gave to her face the sort of radiance that early painters expressed by the aureole. Before her cousin came into her life, Eugénie might have been compared to the Virgin as yet unconscious of her destiny; and now that he had passed out of it, she seemed like the Virgin Mother; she, too, bore love in her heart. Spanish art has depicted these two Marys, so different one from the other—Christianity, with its many symbols, knows no more glorious types than these.

The day after Charles had left them, Eugénie went to mass (as she had resolved to do daily), and on her way back bought a map of the world from the only bookseller in the town. This she pinned to the wall beside her glass, so that she might fol-

low the course of her cousin's voyage to the Indies; and night and morning might be beside him for a little while on that far-off vessel, and see him and ask all the endless questions she longed to ask.

"Are you well? Are you not sad? Am I in your thoughts when you see the star that you told me about? You made me see how beautiful it was."

In the morning she used to sit like one in a dream under the great walnut tree, on the old gray, lichen-covered, worm-eaten bench where they had talked so kindly and so foolishly, where they had built such fair castles in the air in which to live. She thought of the future as she watched the little strip of sky shut in by the high walls on every side, then her eyes wandered over the old buttressed wall and the roof—Charles' room lay beneath it. In short, this solitary persistent love mingling with all her thoughts became the substance, or, as our forefathers would have said, the "staff" of her life.

If Grandet's self-styled friends came in of an evening, she would seem to be in high spirits, but the liveliness was only assumed; she used to talk about Charles with her mother and Nanon the whole morning through, and Nanon—who was of the opinion that without faltering in her duty to her master she might yet feel for her young mistress' troubles—Nanon spoke on this wise—

"If I had had a sweetheart, I would have——I would have gone with him to hell. I would have——well, then, I would just have laid down my life for him, but——no such chance! I shall die without knowing what it is to love. Would you believe it, mamselle, there is that old Cornoiller, who is a good man all the same, dangling about after my savings, just like the others who come here paying court to you and sniffing after the master's money. I see through it; I may be as big as a haystack, but I am as sharp as a needle yet. Well! and yet do you know, mamselle, it may not be love, but I rather like it."

In this way two months went by. The secret that bound the three women so closely together had brought a new interest into the household life hitherto so monotonous. For them Charles still dwelt in the house, and came and went beneath the old gray rafters of the parlor. Every morning and evening Eugénie opened the dressing-case and looked at her aunt's portrait. Her mother, suddenly coming into her room one Sunday morning, found her absorbed in tracing out a likeness to Charles in the lady of the miniature, and Mme. Grandet learned for the first time a terrible secret, how that Eugénie had parted with her treasures and had taken the case in exchange.

"You have let him have it all!" cried the terrified mother. "What will you say to your father on New Year's Day when he asks to see your gold?"

Eugénie's eyes were set in a fixed stare; the horror of this thought so filled the women that half the morning went by, and they were distressed to find themselves too late for high mass, and were only in time for the military mass. The year 1819 was almost over; there were only three more days left. In three days a terrible drama would begin, a drama undignified by poison, dagger, or bloodshed, but fate dealt scarcely more cruelly with the princely house of Atreus than with the actors in this bourgeois tragedy.

"What is to become of us?" said Mme. Grandet, laying down her knitting on her knee.

Poor mother! all the events of the past two months had sadly hindered the knitting, the woolen cuffs for winter wear were not finished yet, a homely and apparently insignificant fact which was to work trouble enough for her. For want of the warm cuffs she caught a chill after a violent perspiration brought on by one of her husband's fearful outbursts of rage.

"My poor child, I have been thinking that if you had only told me about this, we should have had time to write to M. des Grassins in Paris. He might have managed to send us

some gold-pieces like those of yours; and although Grandet knows the look of them so well, still perhaps——"

"But where could we have found so much money?"

"I would have raised it on my property. Besides, M. des Grassins would have befriended us——"

"There is not time enough now," faltered Eugénie in a smothered voice. "To-morrow morning we shall have to go to his room to wish him a happy New Year, shall we not?"

"Oh! Eugénie, why not go and see the Cruchots about it?"

"No, no, that would be putting ourselves in their power; I should be entirely in their hands then. Besides, I have made up my mind. I have acted quite rightly, and I repent of nothing; God will protect me. May His holy will be done! Ah! if you had read that letter, mother, you would have thought of nothing but him."

The next morning, January 1, 1820, the mother and daughter were in an agony of distress that they could not hide; sheer terror suggested the simple expedient of omitting the solemn visit to Grandet's room. The bitter weather served as an excuse; the winter of 1819–20 was the coldest that had been known for years, and snow lay deep on the roofs.

Mme. Grandet called to her husband as soon as she heard him stirring, "Grandet, just let Nanon light a bit of fire in here for me, the air is so sharp that I am shivering under the bedclothes, and at my time of life I must take care of myself. And then," she went on after a little pause, "Eugénie shall come in here to dress. The poor girl may do herself a mischief if she dresses in her own room in such cold. We will come downstairs into the sitting-room and wish you a happy New Year there by the fire."

"Tut, tut, tut, what a tongue! What a way to begin the year, Mme. Grandet! You have never said so much in your life before. You have not had a sop of bread in wine, I suppose?"

There was a moment's pause. Doubtless his wife's proposal suited his notions, for he said, "Very well, I will do as you wish, Mme. Grandet. You really are a good sort of woman, it would be a pity for you to expire before you are due, though, as a rule, the La Bertellières make old bones, don't they, hey?" he cried, after a pause. "Well, their money has fallen in at last; I forgive them," and he coughed.

"You are in spirits this morning," said the poor wife.

"I always am in spirits."

Hey! hey! cooper gay,
Mend your tub and take your pay.

He had quite finished dressing, and came into his wife's room. "Yes, in the name of goodness! it is a mighty hard frost, all the same. We shall have a good breakfast to-day, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a pâté de foies gras, truffled! I am going round to the coach office to see after it. He should have sent a double napoleon for Eugénie along with it," said the cooper, coming closer, and lowering his voice. "I have no gold, I certainly had a few old coins still left, I may tell you that in confidence, but I had to let them go in the course of business," and by way of celebrating the first day of the year he kissed his wife on the forehead.

"Eugénie," cried the kind mother, as soon as Grandet had gone, "I don't know which side of the bed your father got out on, but he is in a good humor this morning. Pshaw! we shall pull through."

"What can have come over the master?" cried Nanon as she came into the room to light the fire. "First of all, he says, 'Good-morning, great stupid, a happy New Year! Go upstairs and light a fire in my wife's room; she is feeling cold.' I thought I must be off my head when I saw him holding out his hand with a six-franc piece in it that hadn't been clipped a bit! There! madame, only look at it! Oh! he is a worthy man, all the same—he is a good man, he is.

There are some as get harder-hearted the older they grow; but he turns sweeter, like your cordial that improves with keeping. He is a very good and a very excellent man——"

Grandet's speculation had been completely successful; this was the cause of his high spirits. M. des Grassins—after deducting various amounts which the cooper owed him, partly for discounting Dutch bills to the amount of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and partly for advances of money for the purchase of a hundred thousand livres worth of consols—M. des Grassins was sending him, by diligence, thirty thousand francs in crowns, the remainder (after the aforesaid deductions had been made) of the cooper's half-yearly dividends, and informed Grandet that consols were steadily rising. They stood at eighty-nine at the present moment, and well-known capitalists were buying for the next account at the end of January at ninety-two. In two months Grandet had made twelve per cent. on his capital; he had straightened his accounts; and henceforward he would receive fifty thousand francs every half-year, clear of taxes or any outgoing expenses. In short, he had grasped the theory of consols (a class of investment of which the provincial mind is exceedingly shy), and, looking ahead, he beheld himself the master of six millions of francs in five years' time—six millions, which would go on accumulating with scarcely any trouble on his part—six millions of francs! And there was the value of his landed property to add to this; he saw himself in a fair way to build up a colossal fortune. The six francs given to Nanon were perhaps in reality the payment for an immense service which the girl had unwittingly done her master.

"Oho! what can M. Grandet be after? He is running as if there were a fire somewhere," the shopkeepers said to each other as they took down their shutters that New Year's morning.

A little later when they saw him coming back from the

quay followed by a porter from the coach office, who was wheeling a barrow piled up with little bags full of something——

"Ah!" said they, "water always makes for the river, the old boy was hurrying after his crowns."

"They flow in on him from Paris, and Froidfond, and Holland," said one.

"He will buy Saumur before he has done," cried another.

"He does not care a rap for the cold; he is always looking after his business," said a woman to her husband.

"Hi! M. Grandet! if you have more of that than you know what to do with, I can help you to get rid of some of it."

"Eh! they are only coppers," said the vine-grower.

"Silver, he means," said the porter in a low voice.

"Keep a still tongue in your head, if you want me to bear you in mind," said M. Grandet as he opened the door.

"Oh! the old fox, I thought he was deaf," said the porter to himself, "but it looks as though he could hear well enough in cold weather."

"Here is a franc for a New Year's gift, and keep quiet about this. Off with you! Nanon will bring back the barrow. Nanon!" cried Grandet, "are the women-folk gone to mass?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, look sharp, and lend a hand here, then," he cried, and loaded her with the bags. In another minute the crowns were safely transferred to his room, where he locked himself in.

"Thump on the wall when breakfast is ready," he called through the door, and take the wheelbarrow back to the coach office."

It was ten o'clock before the family breakfasted.

"Your father will not ask to see your gold now," said

Mme. Grandet as they came back from mass; "and if he does, you can shiver and say it is too cold to go up stairs for it. We shall have time to make up the money again before your birthday——"

Grandet came down the stairs with his head full of schemes for transforming the five-franc pieces just received from Paris into gold coin, which should be neither clipped nor light weight. He thought of his admirably timed investment in government stock, and made up his mind that he would continue to put his money into consols until they rose to a hundred francs. Such meditations as these boded ill for Eugénie. As soon as he came in the two women wished him a prosperous New Year, each in her own way; Mme. Grandet was grave and ceremonious, but his daughter put her arms round his neck and kissed him. "Aha! child," he said, kissing her on both cheeks, "I am thinking and working for you, you see!——I want you to be happy, and if you are to be happy, you must have money; for you won't get anything without it. Look! here is a brand new napoleon, I sent to Paris on purpose for it. In the name of goodness! there is not a speck of gold in the house, except yours, you are the one who has the gold. Let me see your gold, little girl."

"Bah! it is too cold, let us have breakfast," Eugénie answered.

"Well, then, after breakfast we will have a look at it, eh? It will be good for our digestions. That great des Grassins sent us this, all the same," he went on, "so get your breakfast, children, for it costs us nothing. Des Grassins is going on nicely; I am pleased with him; the old fish is doing Charles a service, and all free gratis. Really, he is managing poor dear Grandet's affairs very cleverly. Ououh! ououh!" he cried, with his mouth full, "this is good! Eat away, wife, there is enough here to last us for two days at least."

"I am not hungry. I am very poorly, you know that very well."

"Oh! Ah! but you have a sound constitution; you are a La Bertellière, and you can put away a great deal without any fear of damaging yourself. You may be a trifle sallow, but I have a liking for yellow myself."

The prisoner shrinking from a public and ignominious death could not well await his doom with a more sickening dread than Mme. Grandet and Eugénie felt as they foresaw the end of breakfast and the inevitable sequel. The more boisterously the cooper talked and ate, the lower sank their spirits; but to the girl, in this crisis, a certain support was not lacking, love was strong within her. "I would die a thousand deaths," she thought, "for him, for him!"

She looked at her mother, and courage and defiance shone in her eyes.

By eleven o'clock they had finished breakfast. "Clear everything away," Grandet told Nanon, "but leave us the table. We can look over your little treasure more comfortably so," he said with his eyes on Eugénie. "*Little*, said I? 'Tis not so small, though, upon my word. Your coins altogether are actually worth five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs, then with forty more this morning, that makes six thousand francs all but one. Well, I will give you another franc to make up the sum, because, you see, little girl—— Well! now, why are you listening to us! Just take yourself off, Nanon, and set about your work!"

Nanon vanished.

"Listen, Eugénie, you must let me have your gold. You will not refuse to let your papa have it? Eh, little daughter?"

Neither of the women spoke.

"I myself have no gold left. I had some once, but I have none now. I will give you six thousand francs in silver for it, and you shall invest it; I will show you how. There is really no need to think of a *dozen*. When you are married (which will be before very long) I will find a husband for you who will give you the handsomest *dozen* that has ever been

heard of hereabouts. There is a splendid opportunity just now; you can invest your six thousand francs in government stock, and every six months, when dividends are due, you will have about two hundred francs coming in, all clear of taxes, and no repairs to pay for, and no frosts nor hail nor bad seasons, none of all the tiresome drawbacks you have to lay your account with if you put your money into land. You don't like to part with your gold, eh? Is that it, little girl? Never mind, let me have it all the same. I will look out for gold coins for you, ducats from Holland, and genovines and Portuguese moidores and rupees, the Mogul's rupees; and what with the coins I shall give you on your birthday and so forth, you will have half your little hoard again in three years time, beside the six thousand francs in the funds. What do you say, little girl? Look up, child! There! there! bring it here, my pet. You owe me a good kiss for telling you business secrets and mysteries of the life and death of five-franc pieces. Five-franc pieces! Yes, indeed, the coins live and gad about just like men do; they go and come and sweat and multiply."

Eugénie rose and made a few steps towards the door; then she turned abruptly, looked her father full in the face, and said—

"All *my* gold is gone; I have none left."

"All your gold is gone!" echoed Grandet, starting up, as a horse might rear when the cannon thunders not ten paces from him.

"Yes, it is all gone."

"Eugénie! you are dreaming!"

"No."

"By my father's pruning-hook!" Whenever the cooper swore in this fashion, the floors and ceilings trembled.

"Lord have mercy!" cried Nanon; "how white the mistress is!"

"Grandet! you will kill me with your angry fits," said the poor wife.

"Tut, tut, tut; none of your family ever die. Now, Eugénie! what have you done with your money?" he burst out as he turned upon her.

The girl was on her knees beside Mme. Grandet.

"Look! sir," she said, "my mother is very ill——do not kill her."

Grandet was alarmed; his wife's dark, sallow complexion had grown so white.

"Nanon, come and help me up to bed," she said in a feeble voice. "This is killing me——"

Nanon gave an arm to her mistress, and Eugénie supported her on the other side; but it was only with the greatest difficulty that they reached her room, for the poor mother's strength completely failed her, and she stumbled at every step. Grandet was left alone in the parlor. After a while, however, he came part of the way upstairs, and called out—

"Eugénie! Come down again as soon as your mother is in bed."

"Yes, father."

In no long time she returned to him, after comforting her mother as best she could.

"Now, my daughter," Grandet addressed her, "you will tell me where your money is."

"If I am not perfectly free to do as I like with your presents, father, please take them back again," said Eugénie coldly. She went to the chimney-piece for the napoleon, and gave it to her father.

Grandet pounced upon it, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"I will never give you anything again, I know," he said, pointing his thumb at her. "You look down on your father, do you? You have no confidence in him? Do you know what a father is? If he is not everything to you, he is nothing. *Now;* where is your gold?"

"I do respect you and love you, father, in spite of your

anger; but I would very humbly point out to you that I am twenty-one years old. You have told me that I am of age often enough for me to know it. I have done as I liked with my money, and rest assured that it is in good hands——"

"Whose?"

"That is an inviolable secret," she said. "Have you not your secrets?"

"Am I not the head of my family? May I not be allowed to have my own business affairs?"

"This is my own affair."

"It must be something very unsatisfactory, Mlle. Grandet, if you cannot tell your own father about it."

"It is perfectly satisfactory, and I cannot tell my father about it."

"Tell me, at any rate, when you parted with your gold."

Eugénie shook her head.

"You still had it on your birthday, hadn't you, eh?"

But if greed had made her father crafty, love had taught Eugénie to be wary; she shook her head again.

"Did any one ever hear of such obstinacy, or of such a robbery?" cried Grandet, in a voice which gradually rose till it rang through the house. "What! *here*, in my house, in my own house, some one has taken your gold! Taken all the gold that there was in the place! And I am not to know who it was? Gold is a precious thing. The best of girls go wrong and throw themselves away one way or another; that happens among great folk, and even among decent citizens; but think of throwing gold away! For you gave it to somebody, I suppose, eh?"

Eugénie gave no sign.

"Did any one ever see such a daughter! Can you be a child of mine? If you have parted with your money, you must have a receipt for it——"

"Was I free to do as I wished with it—Yes or no? Was it mine?"

"Why, you are a child."

"I am of age."

At first Grandet was struck dumb by his daughter daring to argue with him, and in this way! He turned pale, stamped, swore, and finding words at last, he shouted—

"Accursed serpent! Miserable girl! Oh! you know well that I love you, and you take advantage of it! You ungrateful child! She would rob and murder her own father! *Pardieu!* you would have thrown all we have at the feet of that vagabond with the morocco boots. By my father's pruning-hook, I cannot disinherit you, but in the name of thunder! I can curse you; you and your cousin and your children. Nothing good can come out of this; do you hear? If it was to Charles that—— But, no, that is impossible. What if that miserable puppy should have robbed me?"

He glared at his daughter, who was still silent and unmoved.

"She does not stir! She does not flinch! She is more of a Grandet than I am. You did not give your gold away for nothing, anyhow. Come, now; tell me about it?"

Eugénie looked up at her father; her satirical glance exasperated him.

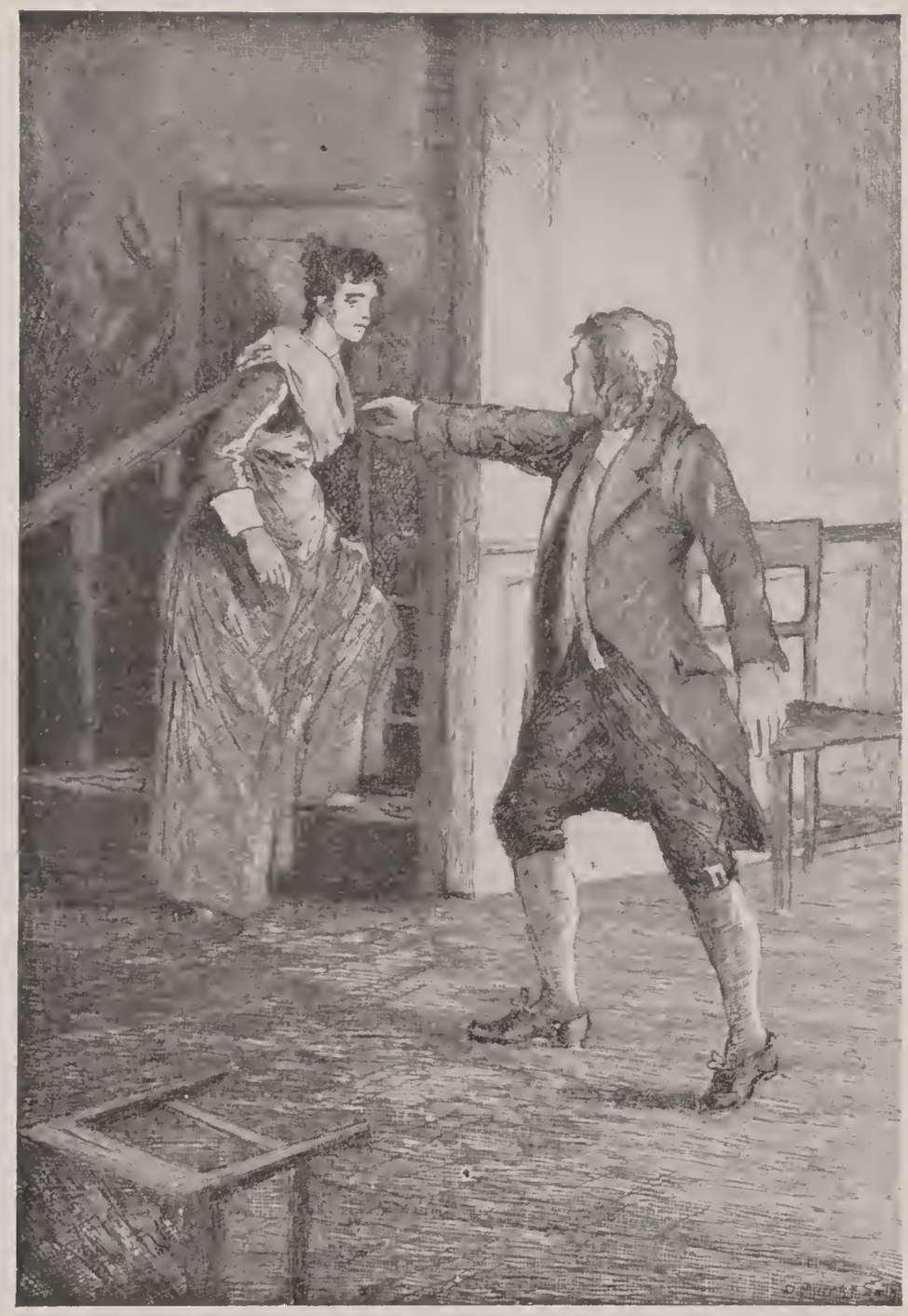
"Eugénie, this is my house; so long as you are under your father's roof you must do as your father bids you. The priests command you to obey me."

Eugénie bent her head again.

"You are wounding all my tenderest feelings," he went on. "Get out of my sight until you are ready to obey me. Go to your room and stay there until I give you leave to come out of it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. Do you hear what I say? Go!"

Eugénie burst into tears, and fled away to her mother. Grandet took several turns in his garden without heeding the snow or the cold; then, suspecting that his daughter would be in his wife's room, and delighted with the idea of catching them in flagrant disobedience to orders, he climbed the stairs

"DO YOU HEAR WHAT I SAY? GO!"



as stealthy as a cat, and suddenly appeared in Mme. Grandet's room. He was right; she was stroking Eugénie's hair, and the girl lay with her face hidden in her mother's breast.

"Poor child! Never mind, your father will relent."

"She has no longer a father!" said the cooper. "Is it really possible, Mme. Grandet, that we have brought such a disobedient daughter into the world? A pretty bringing up; and pious, too, above all things! Well! how is it you are not in your room? Come, off to prison with you; to prison, miss."

"Do you mean to take my daughter away from me, sir?" said Mme. Grandet, as she raised a flushed face and bright, feverish eyes.

"If you want to keep her, take her along with you, and the house will be rid of you both at once—— Thunder! Where is the gold? What has become of the gold?"

Eugénie rose to her feet, looked proudly at her father, and went into her room; he turned the key in the door.

"Nanon!" he shouted, "you can rake out the fire in the parlor;" then he came back and sat down in an easy-chair that stood between the fire and his wife's bedside, saying as he did so, "Of course she gave her gold to that miserable seducer, Charles, who only cared for our money."

Mme. Grandet's love for her daughter gave her courage in the face of this danger; to all appearance she was deaf, dumb, and blind to all that was implied by this speech. She turned on her bed so as to avoid the angry glitter of her husband's eyes.

"I knew nothing about all this," she said. "Your anger makes me so ill, that if my forebodings come true I shall only leave this room when they carry me out feet foremost. I think you might have spared me this scene, sir. I, at all events, have never caused you any vexation. Your daughter loves you, and I am sure she is as innocent as a newborn babe; so do not make her miserable, and take back your word. This cold is terribly sharp; it might make her seriously ill."

"I shall neither see her nor speak to her. She shall stop in her room on bread and water until she has done as her father bids her. What the devil! the head of a family ought to know when gold goes out of his house, and where it goes. She had the only rupees that there are in France, for aught I know; then there were genovines besides, and Dutch ducats——"

"Eugénie is our only child, and even if she had flung them into the water——"

"Into the water!" shouted the worthy cooper. "*Into the water!* Mme. Grandet, you are raving! When I say a thing I mean it, as you well know. If you want to have peace in the house, get her to confess to you, and worm this secret out of her. Women understand each other, and are cleverer at this sort of thing than we are. Whatever she may have done, I certainly shall not eat her. Is she afraid of me? If she had covered her cousin with gold from head to foot, he is safe on the high-seas by this time, hein! We cannot run after him——"

"Really, sir——" his wife began.

But Mme. Grandet's nature had developed during her daughter's trouble; she felt more keenly, and perhaps her thoughts moved more quickly, or it may be that excitement and the strain upon her overwrought nerves had sharpened her mental faculties. She saw the wen on her husband's face twitch ominously even as she began to speak, and changed her purpose without changing her voice.

"Really, sir, have I any more authority over her than you have? She has never said a word about it to me. She takes after you."

"Goodness! your tongue is hung in the middle this morning! Tut, tut, tut; you are going to fly in my face, I suppose? Perhaps you and she are both in it."

He glared at his wife.

"Really, M. Grandet, if you want to kill me, you have

only to keep on as you are doing. I tell you, sir, and if it were to cost me my life, I would say it again—you are too hard on your daughter; she is a great deal more sensible than you are. The money belonged to her; she could only have made a good use of it, and our good works ought to be known to God alone. Sir, I implore you, take Eugénie back into favor. It will lessen the effect of the shock your anger gave me, and perhaps will save my life. My daughter, sir; give me back my daughter!"

"I am off," he said. "It is unbearable here in my house, when a mother and daughter talk and argue as if——Brooouh! Pouah! You have given me bitter New Year's gifts, Eugénie!" he called. "Yes, yes, cry away! You shall repent it, do you hear? What is the good of taking the sacrament six times a quarter if you give your father's gold away on the sly to an idle rascal who will break your heart when you have nothing else left to give him? You will find out what he is, that Charles of yours, with his morocco boots and his stand-off airs. He can have no heart and no conscience either, when he dares to carry off a poor girl's money without the consent of her parents."

As soon as the street-door was shut, Eugénie stole out of her room and came to her mother's bedside.

"You were very brave for your daughter's sake," she said.

"You see where crooked ways lead us, child!——You have made me tell a lie."

"Oh! mother, I will pray to God to let all the punishment fall on me."

"Is it true?" asked Nanon, coming upstairs in dismay, "that mademoiselle here is to be put on bread and water for the rest of her life?"

"What does it matter, Nanon?" asked Eugénie calmly.

"Why, before I would eat 'kitchen' while the daughter of the house is eating dry bread, I would——no, no, it won't do."

"Don't say a word about it, Nanon," Eugénie warned her.

"It would stick in my throat; but you shall see."

Grandet dined alone, for the first time in twenty-four years.

"So you are a widower, sir," said Nanon. "It is a very dismal thing to be a widower when you have a wife and daughter in the house."

"I did not speak to you, did I? Keep a still tongue in your head, or you will have to go. What have you in that saucepan that I can hear boiling away on the stove?"

"Some dripping that I am melting down——"

"There will be some people here this evening; light the fire."

The Cruchots and their friends, Mme. des Grassins and her son, all came in about eight o'clock, and to their amazement saw neither Mme. Grandet nor her daughter.

"My wife is not very well to-day, and Eugénie is upstairs with her," replied the old cooper, without a trace of perturbation on his face.

After an hour spent, in more or less trivial talk, Mme. des Grassins, who had gone upstairs to see Mme. Grandet, came down again to the dining-room, and was met with a general inquiry of "How is Mme. Grandet?"

"She is very far from well," the lady said gravely. "Her health seems to me to be in a very precarious state. At her time of life you ought to take great care of her, papa Grandet."

"We shall see," said the vine-grower abstractedly, and the whole party took leave of him. As soon as the Cruchots were out in the street and the door was shut behind them, Mme. des Grassins turned to them and said, "Something has happened among the Grandets. The mother is very ill; she herself has no idea how ill she is, and the girl's eyes are red, as if she had been crying for a long while. Are they wanting to marry her against her will?"

That night, when the cooper had gone to bed, Nanon, in list slippers, stole up to Eugénie's room, and displayed a raised pie, which she had managed to bake in a saucepan.

"Here, mademoiselle," said the kind soul, "Cornoiller brought a hare for me. You eat so little that the pie will last you for quite a week, and there is no fear of its spoiling in this frost. You shall not live on dry bread, at any rate; it is not at all good for you."

"Poor Nanon!" said Eugénie, as she pressed the girl's hand.

"I have made it very dainty and nice, and *he* never found out about it. I paid for the lard and the bay-leaves out of my six francs; I can surely do as I like with my own money," and the old servant fled, thinking that she heard Grandet stirring.

Several months went by. The cooper went to see his wife at various times in the day, and never mentioned his daughter's name—never saw her, nor made the slightest allusion to her. Mme. Grandet's health grew worse and worse; she had not once left her room since that terrible January morning. But nothing shook the old cooper's determination; he was hard, cold, and unyielding as a block of granite. He came and went, his manner of life was in nowise altered; but he did not stammer now, and he talked less; perhaps, too, in matters of business, people found him harder than before, but errors crept into his book-keeping.

Something had certainly happened in the Grandet family, both Cruchotins and Grassinistes were agreed on that head; and "What can be the matter with the Grandets?" became a stock question which people asked each other at every social gathering in Saumur.

Eugénie went regularly to church, escorted by Nanon. If Mme. des Grassins spoke to her in the porch as she came out, the girl would answer evasively, and the lady's curiosity remained ungratified. But after two months spent in this

fashion it was almost impossible to hide the real state of affairs from Mme. des Grassins or from the Cruchots; a time came when all pretexts were exhausted, and Eugénie's constant absence still demanded an explanation. A little later, though no one could say how or when the secret leaked out, it became common property, and the whole town knew that ever since New Year's Day Mlle. Grandet had been locked up in her room by her father's orders, and that there she lived on bread and water in solitary confinement, and without a fire. Nanon, it was reported, cooked dainties for her, and brought food secretly to her room at night. Further particulars were given. It was even said that only when Grandet was out of the house could the young girl nurse her mother, or indeed see her at all.

People blamed Grandet severely. He was regarded as an outlaw, as it were, by the whole town; all his hardness, his bad faith was remembered against him, and every one shunned him. They whispered and pointed at him as he went by; and as his daughter passed along the crooked street on her way to mass or to vespers, with Nanon at her side, people would hurry to their windows and look curiously at the wealthy heiress' face—a face so sad and so divinely sweet.

The town gossip reached her ears as slowly as it reached her father's. Her imprisonment and her father's displeasure were as nothing to her; had she not her map of the world? And from her window could she not see the little bench, the old wall, and the garden walks? Was not the sweetness of those past kisses still upon her lips? So, sustained by love and by the consciousness of her innocence in the sight of God, she could patiently endure her solitary life and her father's anger; but there was another sorrow, so deep and so overwhelming that Eugénie could not find a refuge from it. The gentle, patient mother was gradually passing away; it seemed as if the beauty of her soul shone out more and more brightly in those dark days as she drew nearer to the tomb. Eugénie often bitterly blamed herself for this illness, telling herself

that she had been the innocent cause of the painful malady that was slowly consuming her mother's life; and, in spite of all her mother said to comfort her, this remorseful feeling made her cling more closely to the love she was to lose so soon. Every morning, as soon as her father had left the house, she went to sit at her mother's bedside. Nanon used to bring her breakfast to her there. But for poor Eugénie in her sadness, this suffering was almost more than she could bear; she looked at her mother's face, and then at Nanon, with tears in her eyes, and was dumb; she did not dare to speak of her cousin now. It was always Mme. Grandet who began to talk of him; it was she who was forced to say, "Where is *he?* Why does *he* not write?"

Neither mother nor daughter had any idea of the distance.

"Let us think of him without talking about him, mother," Eugénie would answer. "You are suffering; you come before every one;" and when she said "every one," Eugénie meant *him.*

"I have no wish to live any longer, child," Mme. Grandet used to say. "God in His protecting care has led me to look forward joyfully to death as the end of my sorrows."

Everything that she said was full of Christian piety. For the first few months of the year her husband breakfasted in her room, and always, as he walked restlessly about, he heard the same words from her, uttered with angelic gentleness, but with firmness; the near approach of death had given her the courage which she had lacked all her life.

"Thank you, sir, for the interest which you take in my health," she said in response to the merest formality of an inquiry; "but if you really wish to sweeten the bitterness of my last moments, and to alleviate my sufferings, forgive our daughter, and act like a Christian, a husband, and a father."

At these words Grandet would come and sit down by the bed, much as a man who is threatened by a shower betakes himself resignedly to the nearest sheltering archway. He

would say nothing, and his wife might say what she liked. To the most pathetic, loving, and fervent prayers, he would reply, "My poor wife, you are looking a bit pale to-day."

His daughter seemed to have passed entirely out of his mind; the mention of her name brought no change over his stony face and hard-set mouth. He always gave the same vague answers to her pleadings, couched in almost the same words, and did not heed his wife's white face, nor the tears that flowed down her cheeks.

"May God forgive you, as I do, sir," she said. "You will have need of mercy some day."

Since his wife's illness had begun he had not ventured to make use of his formidable "Tut, tut, tut," but his tyranny was not relaxed one whit by his wife's angelic gentleness.

Her plain face was growing almost beautiful now as a beautiful nature showed itself more and more, and her soul grew absolute. It seemed as if the spirit of prayer had purified and refined the homely features—as if they were lit up by some inner light. Which of us has not known such faces as this, and seen their final transfiguration—the triumph of a soul that has dwelt for so long among pure and lofty thoughts that they set their seal unmistakably upon the roughest lineaments at last? The sight of this transformation wrought by the physical suffering which stripped the soul of the rags of humanity that hid it, had a certain effect, however feeble, upon that man of bronze—the old cooper. A stubborn habit of silence had succeeded to his old contemptuous ways, a wish to keep up his dignity as a father of a family was apparently the motive for this course.

The faithful Nanon no sooner showed herself in the market-place than people began to rail at her master and to make jokes at his expense; but however loudly public opinion condemned old Grandet, the maidservant, jealous for the honor of the family, stoutly defended him.

"Well, now," she would say to those who spoke ill of her

master, "don't we all grow harder as we grow older? And would you have him different from other people? Just hold your lying tongues. Mademoiselle lives like a queen. She is all by herself no doubt, but she likes it; and my master and mistress have their very good reasons for what they do."

At last, one evening towards the end of spring, Mme. Grandet, feeling that this trouble, even more than her illness, was shortening her days, and that any farther attempt on her part to obtain forgiveness for Eugénie was hopeless, confided her troubles to the Cruchots.

"To put a girl of twenty-two on a diet of bread and water!——" cried the President de Bonfons, "and without just and sufficient cause! Why, that constitutes legal cruelty; she might lodge a complaint; *in as much as*——"

"Come, nephew," said the notary, "that is enough of your law court jargon. Be easy, madame; I will bring this imprisonment to an end to-morrow."

Eugénie heard, and came out of her room.

"Gentlemen," she said, impelled by a certain pride, "do nothing in this matter, I beg of you. My father is master in his own house, and so long as I live under his roof I ought to obey him. No one has any right to criticise his conduct; he is answerable to God, and to God alone. If you have any friendly feeling for me, I entreat you to say nothing whatever about this. If you expose my father to censure, you would lower us all in the eyes of the world. I am very thankful to you, gentlemen, for the interest you have taken in me, and you will oblige me still farther if you will put a stop to the gossip that is going on in the town. I only heard of it by accident."

"She is right," said Mme. Grandet.

"Mademoiselle, the best possible way to stop people's talk would be to set you at liberty," said the old notary respectfully; he was struck with the beauty which solitude and love and sadness had brought into Eugénie's face.

"Well, Eugénie, leave it in M. Cruchot's hands, as he seems to think success is certain. He knows your father, and he knows, too, how to put the matter before him. You and your father must be reconciled at all costs, if you want me to be happy during the little time I have yet to live."

The next morning Grandet went out to take a certain number of turns round the little garden, a habit that he had fallen into during Eugénie's incarceration. He chose to take the air while Eugénie was dressing; and when he had reached the great walnut tree, he stood behind it for a few moments and looked at her window. He watched her as she brushed her long hair, and there was a sharp struggle doubtless between his natural stubborn will and a longing to take his daughter in his arms and kiss her.

He would often go to sit on the little worm-eaten bench where Charles and Eugénie had vowed to love each other for ever; and she, his daughter, also watched her father furtively, or looked into her glass and saw him reflected there, and the garden and the bench. If he rose and began to walk again, she went to sit in the window. It was pleasant to her to be there. She studied the bit of old wall, the delicate sprays of wild flowers that grew in its crevices, the maidenhair fern, the morning glories, and a little plant with thick leaves and white or yellow flowers, a sort of stone-crop that grows everywhere among the vines at Saumur and Tours.

Old M. Cruchot came early on a bright June morning and found the vine-grower sitting on the little bench with his back against the wall, absorbed in watching his daughter.

"What can I do for you, M. Cruchot?" he asked, as he became aware of the notary's presence.

"I have come about a matter of business."

"Aha! Have you some gold to exchange for crowns?"

"No, no. It is not a question of money this time, but of your daughter Eugénie. Everybody is talking about you and her."

"What business is it of theirs? A man's house is his castle."

"Just so; and a man can kill himself if he has a mind to, or he can do worse, he can throw his money out of the windows."

"What?"

"Eh! but your wife is very ill, my friend. You ought even to call in M. Bergerin, her life is in danger. If she were to die for want of proper care, you would hear of it, I am sure."

"Tut, tut, tut!" you know what is the matter with her, and when once one of these doctors sets foot in your house, they will come five or six times a day."

"After all, Grandet, you will do as you think best. We are old friends; there is no one in all Saumur who has your interests more at heart than I, so it was only my duty to let you know this. Whatever happens, you are responsible, and you understand your own business, so there it is. Besides, that was not what I came to speak about. There is something else more serious for you, perhaps; for, after all, you do not wish to kill your wife, she is too useful to you. Just think what your position would be if anything happened to Mme. Grandet; you would have your daughter to face. You would have to give an account to Eugénie of her mother's share of your joint estate; and if she chose, your daughter might demand her mother's fortune, for she, and not you, will succeed to it; and in that case you might have to sell Froidfond."

Cruchot's words were like a bolt from the blue; for much as the worthy cooper knew about business, he knew very little law. The idea of a forced sale had never occurred to him.

"So I should strongly recommend you to treat her kindly," the notary concluded.

"But do you know what she has done, Cruchot?"

"No. What was it?" asked the notary; he felt curious to

know the reason of the quarrel, and a confidence from old Grandet was an interesting novelty.

"She has given away her gold."

"Oh! well, it belonged to her, didn't it?"

"That is what they all say!" said Grandet, letting his arms fall with a tragic gesture.

"And for a trifle like that you would shut yourself out from all hope of any concessions which you will want her to make if her mother dies?"

"Ah! do you call six thousand francs in gold a trifle?"

"Eh! my old friend, have you any idea what it will cost you to have your property valued and divided if Eugénie should compel you to do so?"

"What would it cost?"

"Two, three, or even four thousand francs. How could you know what it was worth unless you put it up to public auction? While if you come to an understanding——"

"By my father's pruning hook!" cried the vine-grower, sinking back, and turning quite pale. "We will see about this, Cruchot."

After a moment of agony or of dumb bewilderment, Grandet spoke, with his eyes fixed on his neighbor's face. "Life is very hard," he said. "It is full of troubles. Cruchot," he went on, earnestly, "you are incapable of deceiving me; give me your word of honor that this ditty of yours has a solid foundation. Let me look at the Code; I want to see the Code!"

"My poor friend," said the notary, "I ought to understand my own profession."

"Then it is really true? I shall be plundered, cheated, robbed, and murdered by my own daughter!"

"She is her mother's heiress."

"Then what is the good of having children? Oh! my wife, I love my wife; luckily, she has a sound constitution; she is a La Bertellière."

"She has not a month to live."

The cooper struck his forehead, took a few paces, and then came back again.

"What is to be done?" he demanded of Cruchot, with a tragic expression on his face.

"Well, perhaps Eugénie might simply give up her claims to her mother's property. You do not mean to disinherit her, do you? But do not treat her harshly if you want her to make a concession of that kind. I am speaking against my own interests, my friend. How do I make a living but by drawing up inventories and conveyances and deeds of arrangement and by winding up estates?"

"We shall see, we shall see. Let us say no more about this now, Cruchot. You have wrung my very soul. Have you taken any gold lately?"

"No; but I have some old louis, nine or ten perhaps, which you can have. Look here, my good friend, make it up with Eugénie; all Saumur is pointing a finger at you."

"The rogues!"

"Well, consols have risen to ninety-nine, so you should be satisfied for once in your life."

"At ninety-nine, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Hey! hey! ninety-nine!" the old man said, as he went with the notary to the street-door. He felt too much agitated by what he had just heard to stay quietly at home; so he went up to his wife's room.

"Come, mother, you may spend the day with your daughter, I am going to Froidfond. Be good, both of you, while I am away. This is our wedding-day, dear wife. Stay! here are ten crowns for you, for the Fête-Dieu procession; you have wanted to give it for long enough. Take a holiday! have some fun, keep up your spirits and get well. *Vive la joie!*"

He threw down ten crowns of six francs each upon the bed, took her face in his hands, and kissed her on the forehead.

"You are feeling better, dear wife, are you not?"

"But how can you think of receiving God, who forgives, into your house, when you have shut your heart against your daughter?" she said, with deep feeling in her voice.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said the father soothingly; "we will see about that."

"Merciful heaven! Eugénie!" called the mother, her face flushed with joy; "Eugénie, come and give your father a kiss, you are forgiven!" But her worthy father had vanished. He fled with all his might in the direction of his vineyards, where he set himself to the task of constructing his new world out of this chaos of strange ideas.

Grandet had just entered upon his sixty-seventh year. Avarice had gained a stronger hold upon him during the past two years of his life; indeed, all lasting passions grow with man's growth; and it had come to pass with him, as with all men whose lives are ruled by one master-idea, that he clung with all the force of his imagination to the symbol which represented that idea for him. Gold—to have gold, that he might see and touch it, had become with him a perfect monomania. His disposition to tyrannize had also grown with his love of money, and it seemed to him to be monstrous that he should be called upon to give up the least portion of his property on the death of his wife. Was he to render an account of her fortune, and to have an inventory drawn up of everything he possessed—personalty and real estate, and put it all up to auction?

"That would be stark ruin," he said aloud to himself, as he stood among his vines and examined their stems.

He made up his mind at last, and came back to Saumur at dinner-time fully determined on his course. He would humor Eugénie, and coax and cajole her so that he might die royally, keeping the control of his millions in his hands until his latest sigh. It happened that he let himself in with his master key; he crept noiselessly as a wolf up the stairs to his

wife's room, which he entered just as Eugénie was setting the dressing-case, in all its golden glory, upon her mother's bed. The two women had stolen a pleasure in Grandet's absence; they were looking at the portraits and tracing out Charles' features in his mother's likeness.

"It is just his forehead and his mouth!" Eugénie was saying, as the vine-grower opened the door.

Mme. Grandet saw how her husband's eyes darted upon the gold. "Oh! God, have pity upon us!" she cried.

The vine-grower seized upon the dressing-case as a tiger might spring upon a sleeping child.

"What may this be?" he said, carrying off the treasure to the window, where he ensconced himself with it. "Gold! solid gold!" he cried, "and plenty of it too; there is a couple of pounds' weight here. Aha! so this was what Charles gave you in exchange for your pretty gold-pieces? Why did you not tell me? It was a good stroke of business, little girl. You are your father's own daughter, I see. (Eugénie trembled from head to foot.) This belongs to Charles, doesn't it?" the good man went on.

"Yes, father; it is not mine. That case is a sacred trust."

"Tut, tut, tut! he has gone off with your money; you ought to make good the loss of your little treasure."

"Oh! father!——"

The old man had taken out his pocket-knife, with a view to wrenching away a plate of the precious metal, and for the moment had been obliged to lay the case on a chair beside him. Eugénie sprang forward to secure her treasure; but the cooper, who had kept an eye upon his daughter as well as upon the casket, put out his arm to prevent this, and thrust her back so roughly that she fell on to the bed.

"Sir! sir!" cried the mother, rising and sitting upright.

Grandet had drawn out his knife, and was about to insert the blade beneath the plate.

"Father!" cried Eugénie, going down on her knees and dragging herself nearer to him as she knelt; "father, in the name of all the saints, and the Holy Virgin, for the sake of Christ who died on the cross, for your own soul's salvation, father, if you have any regard for my life, do not touch it! The case is not yours, and it is not mine. It belongs to an unhappy kinsman, who gave it into my keeping, and I ought to give it back to him untouched."

"What do you look at it for if it is a deposit? Looking at it is worse than touching it."

"Do not pull it to pieces, father! You will bring dishonor upon me. Father! do you hear me?"

"For pity's sake, sir!" entreated the mother.

"Father!"

The shrill cry rang through the house and brought the frightened Nanon upstairs. Eugénie caught up a knife that lay within her reach.

"Well?" said Grandet, calmly, with a cold smile on his lips.

"Sir! you are killing me!" said the mother.

"Father, if you cut away a single scrap of gold, I shall stab myself with this knife. It is your doing that my mother is dying, and now my death will also be laid at your door. It shall be wound for wound."

Grandet held his knife suspended above the case, looked at his daughter, and hesitated.

"Would you really do it, Eugénie?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" said the mother.

"She would do as she says," cried Nanon. "Do be sensible, sir, for once in your life."

The cooper wavered for a moment, looking first at the gold and then at his daughter.

Mme. Grandet fainted.

"There! sir, you see, the mistress is dying," cried Nanon.

"There! there! child, do not let us fall out about a box.

Just take it back!" cried the cooper hastily, throwing the case on to the bed. "And, Nanon, go for M. Bergerin. Come! come! mother," he said, and he kissed his wife's hand; "never mind, there! there! we have made it up, haven't we, little girl? No more dry bread; you shall eat whatever you like—— Ah! she is opening her eyes. Well, now, little mother, dear little mother, don't take on so! Look! I am going to kiss Eugénie! She loves her cousin, does she? She shall marry him if she likes; she shall keep his little case for him. But you must live for a long while yet, my poor wife! Come! turn your head a little. Listen! you shall have the finest altar at the Fête-Dieu that has ever been seen in Saumur."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* how can you treat your wife and daughter in this way!" moaned Mme. Grandet.

"I will never do so again, never again!" cried the cooper. "You shall see, my poor wife."

He went to his strong room and returned with a handful of louis d'or, which he scattered on the coverlet.

"There! Eugénie, there! wife, those are for you," he said, fingering the gold coins as they lay. "Come! cheer up, and get well, you shall want for nothing, neither you nor Eugénie. There are a hundred louis for her. You will not give them away, will you, eh, Eugénie?"

Mme. Grandet and her daughter gazed at each other in amazement.

"Take back the money, father; we want nothing, nothing but your love."

"Oh! well, just as you like," he said, as he pocketed the louis, "let us live together like good friends. Let us all go down to the dining-room and have dinner, and play loto every evening, and put our two sous into the pool, and be as merry as the maids. Eh! my wife?"

"Alas! how I wish that I could, if you would like it," said the dying woman, "but I am not strong enough to get up."

"Poor mother!" said the cooper, "you do not know how much I love you; and you too, child!"

He drew his daughter to him and embraced her with fervor.

"Oh! how pleasant it is to kiss one's daughter after a squabble, my little girl! There! mother, do you see? We are quite at one again now. Just go and lock that away," he said to Eugénie, as he pointed to the case. "There! there! don't be frightened; I will never say another word to you about it."

M. Bergerin, who was regarded as the cleverest doctor in Saumur, came before very long. He told Grandet plainly after the interview that the patient was very seriously ill; that any excitement might be fatal to her; that with a light diet, perfect tranquillity, and the most constant care, her life might possibly be prolonged until the end of the autumn.

"Will it be an expensive illness?" asked Grandet. "Will she want a lot of physic?"

"Not much physic, but very careful nursing," answered the doctor, who could not help smiling.

"After all, M. Bergerin, you are a man of honor," said Grandet uneasily. "I can depend upon you, can I not? Come and see my wife whenever and as often as you think it really necessary. Preserve her life. My good wife—I am very fond of her, you see, though I may not show it; it is all shut up inside me, and I am one that takes things terribly to heart; I am in trouble too. It all began with my brother's death; I am spending, oh!—heaps of money in Paris for him—the very eyes out of my head, in fact, and it seems as if there were no end to it. Good-day, sir. If you can save my wife, save her, even if it takes a hundred or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent wishes that his wife might be restored to health, for this question of the inheritance was like a foretaste of death for him; in spite of his readiness to fulfill the least wishes of the astonished mother and daughter

in every possible way ; in spite of Eugénie's tenderest and most devoted care, it was evident that Mme. Grandet's life was rapidly drawing to a close. Day by day she grew weaker, and, as often happens at her time of life, she had no strength to resist the disease that was wasting her away. She seemed to have no more vitality than the autumn leaves ; and as the sunlight shining through the leaves turns them to gold, so she seemed to be transformed by the light of heaven. Her death was a fitting close to her life, a death wholly Christian ; is not that saying that it was sublime ? Her love for her daughter, her meek virtues, her angelic patience, had never shone more brightly than in that month of October, 1822, when she passed away. All through her illness she had never uttered the slightest complaint, and her spotless soul left earth for heaven with but one regret—for the daughter whose sweet companionship had been the solace of her dreary life, and for whom her dying eyes foresaw troubles and sorrows manifold. She trembled at the thought of this lamb, spotless as she herself was, left alone in the world among selfish beings who sought to despoil her of her fleece, her treasure.

"There is no happiness save in heaven," she said just before she died ; "you will know that one day, my child."

On the morrow after her mother's death, it seemed to Eugénie that she had yet one more reason for clinging fondly to the old house where she had been born, and where she had found life so hard of late—it became for her the place where her mother had died. She could not see the old chair set on little blocks of wood, the place by the window where her mother used to sit, without shedding tears. Her father showed her such tenderness, and took such care of her, that she began to think that she had never understood his nature ; he used to come to her room and take her down to breakfast on his arm, and sit looking at her for whole hours with something almost like kindness in his eyes, with the same brooding look that he gave his gold. Indeed, the old cooper almost

trembled before his daughter, and was altogether so unlike himself, that Nanon and the Cruchotins wondered at these signs of weakness, and set it down to his advanced age; they began to fear that the old man's mind was giving way. But when the day came on which the family began to wear their mourning, M. Cruchot, who alone was in his client's confidence, was invited to dinner, and these mysteries were explained. Grandet waited till the table had been cleared, and the doors carefully shut.

Then he began: "My dear child you are your mother's heiress, and there are some little matters of business that we must settle between us. Is that not so, eh, Cruchot?"

"Yes."

"Is it really pressing; must it be settled to-day, father?"

"Yes, yes, little girl. I could not endure this suspense any longer, and I am sure you would not make things hard for me."

"Oh! father——"

"Well, then, everything must be decided to-night."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Well, little girl, it is not for me to tell you. You tell her, Cruchot."

"Mademoiselle, your father wants neither to divide nor to sell his property, nor to pay a heavy succession duty upon the ready money he may happen to have just now. So if these complications are to be avoided, there must be no inventory made out, and all the property must remain undivided for the present——"

"Cruchot, are you quite sure of what you are saying that you talk in this way before a child?"

"Let me say what I have to say, Grandet."

"Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter would plunder me. You would not plunder me, would you, little girl?"

"But what am I to do, M. Cruchot?" asked Eugénie, losing patience.

"Well," said the notary, "you must sign this deed, by which you renounce your claims to your mother's property; the property would be secured to you, but your father would have the use of it for his life, and there would be no need to make a division now."

"I understand nothing of all this that you are saying," Eugénie answered; "give me the deed, and show me where I am to sign my name."

Grandet looked from the document to his daughter, and again from his daughter to the document. His agitation was so great that he actually wiped several drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"I would much rather you simply waived all claim to your poor dear mother's property, little girl," he broke in, "instead of signing that deed. It will cost a lot to register it. I would rather you renounced your claims and trusted to me for the future. I would allow you a good round sum, say a hundred francs every month. You could pay for masses then, you see; you could have masses said for any one that——Eh? A hundred francs (in livres) every month?"

"I will do just as you like, father."

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, "it is my duty to point out to you that you are robbing yourself without guarantee——"

"*Eh! mon Dieu!*" she answered. "What does that matter to me?"

"Do be quiet, Cruchot. So it is settled, quite settled!" cried Grandet, taking his daughter's hand and striking his own into it. "You will not go back from your word, Eugénie? You are a good girl, hein!"

"Oh! father——"

In his joy he embraced his daughter, almost suffocating her as he did so.

"There! child, you have given fresh life to your father; but you are only giving him what he gave you, so we are quits. This is how business ought to be conducted, and life is a busi-

ness transaction. Bless you! You are a good girl, and one that really loves her old father. You can do as you like now. Then good-bye till to-morrow, Cruchot," he added, turning to the horrified notary. "You will see that the deed of renunciation is properly drawn up for the clerk of the court."

By noon next day the declaration was drawn up, and Eugénie herself signed away all her rights to her heritage. Yet a year slipped by, and the cooper had not kept his promise, and Eugénie had not received a sou of the monthly income which was to have been hers; when Eugénie spoke to him about it, half-laughingly, he could not help blushing; he hurried up to his room, and when he came down again he handed her about a third of the jewelry which he had purchased of his nephew.

"There! child," he said, with a certain sarcastic ring in his voice; "will you take these for your twelve hundred francs?"

"Oh! father, really? Will you really give them to me?"

"You shall have as much next year again," said he, flinging it into her lap; "and so, before very long, you will have all his trinkets," he added, rubbing his hands. He had made a very good bargain, thanks to his daughter's sentiment about the jewelry, and was in high good-humor.

Yet, although the old man was still hale and vigorous, he began to see that he must take his daughter into his confidence, and that she must learn to manage his concerns. So with this end in view he required her to be present while he gave out the daily stores, and for two years he made her receive the portion of the rent which was paid in kind. Gradually she came to know the names of the vineyards and farms; he took her with him when he visited his tenants. By the end of the third year he considered the initiation was complete; and, in truth, she had fallen into his ways unquestioningly, till it had become a matter of habit with her to do as her father had done before her. He had no further doubts,

gave over the keys of the storeroom into her keeping, and installed her as mistress of the house.

Five years went by in this way, and no event disturbed their monotonous existence. Eugénie and her father lived a life of methodical routine with the same regularity of movement that characterized the old clock; doing the same things at the same hour day after day, year after year. Every one knew that there had been a profound sorrow in Mlle. Grandet's life; every circle in Saumur had its theories of this secret trouble, and its suspicions as to the state of the heiress' heart, but she never let fall a word that could enlighten any one on either point.

She saw no one but the three Cruchots and a few of their friends, who had gradually been admitted as visitors to the house. Under their instructions she had mastered the game of whist, and they dropped in nearly every evening for a rubber. In the year 1827 her father began to feel the infirmities of age, and was obliged to take her still farther into his confidence; she learned the full extent of his landed possessions, and was recommended in all cases of difficulty to refer to the notary Cruchot, whose integrity could be depended upon. Grandet reached the age of eighty-two, and towards the end of the year had a paralytic seizure, from which he never rallied. M. Bergerin gave him up, and Eugénie realized that very shortly she would be quite alone in the world; the thought drew her more closely to her father; she clung to this last link of affection that bound her to another soul. Love was all the world for her, as it is for all women who love; and Charles had gone out of her world. She nursed her father with sublime devotion; the old man's intellect had grown feeble, but the greed of gold had become an instinct which survived his faculties.

Grandet died as he had lived. Every morning during that slow death he had himself wheeled across his room to a place beside the fire, whence he could keep the door of his cabinet

in view; on the other side of the door, no doubt, lay his hoarded treasures of gold. He sat there, passive and motionless; but if any one entered the room, he would glance uneasily at the newcomer, and then at the door with its sheathing of iron plates. He would ask the meaning of every sound, however faint, and, to the notary's amazement, the old man heard the dog bark in the yard at the back of the house. He roused from this apparent stupor at the proper hour on the days for receiving his rents and dues, for settling accounts with his vine-dressers, and giving receipts. Then he shifted his armchair round on its casters, until he faced the door of his cabinet, and his daughter was called upon to open it, and to put away the little bags of money in neat piles, one upon the other. He would watch her until it was all over and the door was locked again; and as soon as she had returned the precious key to him, he would turn round noiselessly and take up his old position, putting the key in his waistcoat pocket, where he felt for it from time to time.

His old friend the notary felt sure that it was only a question of time, and that Eugénie must of necessity marry his nephew the magistrate, unless, indeed, Charles Grandet returned; so he redoubled his attentions. He came every day to take Grandet's instructions, went at his bidding to Froidfond, to farm and meadow and vineyard; sold vintages, and exchanged all moneys received for gold, which was secretly sent to join the piles of bags stored up in the cabinet.

Then death came up close at last, and the vine-grower's strong frame wrestled with the Destroyer. Even in those days he would sit as usual by the fire, facing the door of his cabinet. He used to drag off the blankets that they wrapped round him, and try to fold them, and say to Nanon, "Lock that up; lock that up, or they will rob me."

So long as he could open his eyes, where the last spark of life seemed to linger, they used to turn at once to the door of the room where all his treasures lay, and he would say



HE WOULD SIT FOR WHOLE HOURS WITH HIS EYES FIXED ON THE LOUIS.

to his daughter, in tones that seemed to thrill with a panic of fear—

"*Are they there still?*"

"Yes, father."

"Keep watch over the gold!——Let me see the gold," her father would say.

Then Eugénie used to spread out the louis on a table before him, and he would sit for whole hours with his eyes fixed on the louis in an unseeing stare, like that of a child who begins to see for the first time; and sometimes a weak imbecile smile, painful to see, would steal across his features.

"That warms me!" he muttered more than once, and his face expressed a perfect content.

When the curé came to administer the sacrament, all the life seemed to have died out of the miser's eyes, but they lit up for the first time for many hours at the sight of the silver crucifix, the candlesticks, and holy water vessel, all of silver; he fixed his gaze on the precious metal, and the wen twitched for the last time.

As the priest held the gilded crucifix above him that the image of Christ might be laid to his lips, he made a frightful effort to clutch it—a last effort which cost him his life. He called to Eugénie, who saw nothing; she was kneeling beside him, bathing in tears the hand that was growing cold already. "Give me your blessing, father," she entreated. "Be very careful!" the last words came from him; "one day you will render an account to me of everything here below." Which utterance clearly shows that a miser should adopt Christianity as his religion.

So Eugénie Grandet was now alone in the world, and her house was left to her desolate. There was no one but Nanon with whom she could talk over her troubles; she could look into no other eyes and find a response to them; big Nanon was the only human being who loved her for herself.

For Eugénie, Nanon was a providence; she was no longer a servant, she was an humble friend.

M. Cruchot informed Eugénie that she had three hundred thousand livres a year, derived from landed property in and around Saumur, besides six millions in the three per cents. (invested when the funds were at sixty francs, whereas they now stood at seventy-seven), and in ready money two millions in gold, and a hundred thousand francs in silver, without counting any arrears that were due. Altogether her property amounted to about seventeen million francs.

"Where can my cousin be?" she said to herself.

On the day when M. Cruchot laid these facts before his new client, together with the information that the estate was now clear and free from all outstanding liabilities, Eugénie and Nanon sat on either side of the hearth, in the parlor, now so empty and so full of memories; everything recalled past days, from her mother's chair set on its wooden blocks to the glass tumbler out of which her cousin once drank.

"Nanon, we are alone, you and I."

"Yes, mamselle; if I only knew where he was, the charming young gentleman, I would set off on foot to find him."

"The sea lies between us," said Eugénie.

While the poor lonely heiress, with her faithful old servant for company, was shedding tears in the cold, dark house, which was all the world she knew, men talked from Orleans to Nantes of nothing but Mlle. Grandet and her seventeen millions. One of her first acts was to settle a pension of twelve hundred francs on Nanon, who, possessing already an income of six hundred francs of her own, at once became a great match. In less than a month she exchanged her condition of spinster for that of wife, at the instance and through the persuasion of Antoine Cornoiller, who was promoted to the position of bailiff and keeper to Mlle. Grandet. Mme.

Cornoiller had an immense advantage over her contemporaries; her large features had stood the test of time better than those of many a comelier woman. She might be fifty-nine years of age, but she did not look more than forty; thanks to an almost monastic regimen, she possessed rugged health and a high color, time seemed to have no effect on her, and perhaps she had never looked so well in her life as she did on her wedding-day. She had the compensating qualities of her style of ugliness; she was tall, stout, and strong; her face wore an indestructible expression of good-humor, and Cornoiller's lot seemed an enviable one to many beholders.

"Fast color," said the draper.

"She might have a family yet," said the dry-salter; "she is as well preserved as if she had been kept in brine, asking your pardon."

"She is rich; that fellow Cornoiller has done a good day's work," said another neighbor.

When Nanon left the old house and went down the crooked street on her way to the parish church, she met with nothing but congratulations and good-wishes. Nanon was very popular with her neighbors. Eugénie gave her three dozen spoons and forks as a wedding present. Cornoiller, quite overcome with such munificence, spoke of his mistress with tears in his eyes; he would have let himself be cut in pieces for her. Mme. Cornoiller became Eugénie's confidential servant; she was not only married, and had a husband of her own, her dignity was yet further increased, her happiness was doubled. *She* had at last a storeroom and a bunch of keys; *she* too gave out provisions just as her late master used to do. Then she had two subordinates—a cook and a waiting-woman, who took charge of the house linen and made Mlle. Grandet's dresses. As for Cornoiller, he combined the functions of forester and steward. It is needless to say that the cook and waiting-woman of Nanon's choosing were real domestic *treasures*. The tenants scarcely noticed the death of their late

landlord; they were thoroughly broken in to a severe discipline, and M. and Mme. Cornoiller's reign was no whit less rigorous than that of the old régime.

Eugénie was a woman of thirty, and as yet had known none of the happiness of life. All through her joyless, monotonous childhood she had had but one companion, a broken-spirited mother, whose sensitive nature had found little but suffering in a hard life. That mother had joyfully taken leave of existence, pitying the daughter who must still live on in the world. Eugénie would never lose the sense of her loss, but little of the bitterness of self-reproach mingled with her memories of her mother. She felt that she had always done a daughter's duty to her mother.

Love, her first and only love, had been a fresh source of suffering for Eugénie. For a few brief days she had seen her lover; she had given her heart to him between two stolen kisses; then he had left her, and had set the lands and seas of the world between them. Her father had cursed her for this love; it had nearly cost her her mother's life; it had brought her pain and sorrow and a few faint hopes. She had striven towards her happiness till her own forces had failed her, and another had not come to her aid.

Our souls live by giving and receiving; we have need of another soul; whatever it gives us we make our own, and give back again in overflowing measure. This is as vitally necessary for our inner life as breathing is for our corporeal existence. Without that wonderful physical process we perish; the heart suffers from lack of air, and ceases to beat. Eugénie was beginning to suffer.

She found no solace in her wealth; it could do nothing for her; her love, her religion, her faith in the future made up all her life. Love was teaching her what eternity meant. Her own heart and the Gospel each spoke to her of a life to come; life was everlasting, and love no less eternal. Night and day she dwelt with these two infinite thoughts, perhaps

for her they were but one. She withdrew more and more into herself; she loved, and believed that she was loved.

For seven years her passion had wholly engrossed her.

Her treasures were not those millions left to her by her father, the money that went on accumulating year after year; but the two portraits which hung above her bed, Charles' leather case, the jewels which she had bought back from her father, and which were now proudly set forth on a layer of cotton wool inside the drawer in the old chest, and her aunt's thimble which Mme. Grandet had used; every day Eugénie took up a piece of embroidery, a sort of Penelope's web, which she had only begun that she might wear the golden thimble, endeared to her by so many memories.

It seemed hardly probable that Mlle. Grandet would marry while she still wore mourning. Her sincere piety was well known. So the Cruchot family, counseled by the astute old Abbé, was fain to be content with surrounding the heiress with the most affectionate attentions. Her dining-room was filled every evening with the warmest and most devoted Cruchotins, who endeavored to surpass each other in singing the praises of the mistress of the house in every key. She had her physician-in-ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her mistress of the robes, her prime minister, and last, but by no means least, her chancellor—a chancellor whose aim it was to keep her informed of everything. If the heiress had expressed any wish for a train-bearer, they would have found one for her. She was a queen, in fact, and never was queen so adroitly flattered. A great soul never stoops to flattery; it is the resource of little natures, who succeed in making themselves smaller still, that they may the better creep into the hearts of those about whom they circle. Flattery, by its very nature, implies an interested motive. So the people who filled Mlle. Grandet's sitting-room every evening (they addressed her and spoke of her among themselves as Mlle. de Froidfond now) heaped their praises upon their

hostess in a manner truly marvelous. This chorus of praise embarrassed Eugénie at first; but however gross the flattery might be, she became accustomed to hear her beauty extolled, and if some newcomer had considered her to be plain, she certainly would have winced more under the criticism than she might have done eight years ago. She came at last to welcome their homage, which in her secret heart she laid at the feet of her idol. So also, by degrees, she accepted the position, and allowed herself to be treated as a queen, and saw her little court full every evening.

M. le Président de Bonfons was the hero of the circle; they lauded his talents, his personal appearance, his learning, his amiability; he was an inexhaustible subject of admiring comment. Such an one would call attention to the fact that in seven years the magistrate had largely increased his fortune; Bonfons had at least ten thousand francs a year; and his property, like the lands of all the Cruchots in fact, lay within the compass of the heiress' vast estates.

"Do you know, mademoiselle," another courtier would remark, "that the Cruchots have forty thousand livres a year among them!"

"And they are putting money by," said Mlle. de Gribeaucourt, an old and trusty Cruchotine. "Quite lately a gentleman came from Paris on purpose to offer M. Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his professional connection. If he could gain an appointment as justice of the peace, he ought to take the offer."

"He means to succeed M. de Bonfons as President, and is taking steps to that end," said Mme. d'Orsonval, "for M. le Président will be a councilor, and then a president of a court; he is so gifted that he is sure to succeed."

"Yes," said another, "he is a very remarkable man. Do you not think so, mademoiselle?"

"M. le Président" had striven to act up to the part he wanted to play. He was forty years old, his countenance was

dark and ill-favored, he had, moreover, the wizened look which is frequently seen in men of his profession; but he affected the airs of youth, sported a malacca cane, refrained from taking snuff in Mlle. Grandet's house, and went thither arrayed in a white cravat and a shirt with huge frills, which gave him a quaint family resemblance to a turkey-gobbler. He called the fair heiress "our dear Eugénie," and spoke as if he were an intimate friend of the family. In fact, but for the number of those assembled, and the substitution of whist for loto, and the absence of M. and Mme. Grandet, the scene was scarcely changed; it might almost have been that first evening on which this story began.

The pack was still in pursuit of Eugénie's millions; it was a more numerous pack now; they gave tongue together, and hunted down their prey more systematically.

If Charles had come back from the far-off Indies, he would have found the same motives at work and almost the same people. Mme. des Grassins, for whom Eugénie had nothing but kindness and pity, still remained to vex the Cruchots. Eugénie's face still shone out against the dark background, and Charles (though invisible) reigned there supreme as in other days.

Yet some advance had been made. Eugénie's birthday bouquet was never forgotten by the magistrate. Indeed, it had become an institution; every evening he brought the heiress a huge and wonderful bouquet. Mme. Cornoiller ostentatiously placed these offerings in a vase, and promptly flung them into a corner of the yard as soon as the visitors had departed.

In the early spring Mme. des Grassins made a move, and sought to trouble the felicity of the Cruchotins by talking to Eugénie of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ruined fortunes might be retrieved if the heiress would return his estate to him by a marriage contract. Mme. des Grassins lauded the Marquis and his title to the skies; and, taking Eugénie's quiet

smile for consent, she went about saying that M. le Président Cruchot's marriage was not such a settled thing as *some* people imagined.

"M. de Froidfond may be fifty years old," she said, "but he looks no older than M. Cruchot; he is a widower, and has a family, it is true; but he is a marquis, he will be a peer of France one of these days, it is not such a bad match as times go. I know of my own certain knowledge that when old Grandet added his own property to the Froidfond estate he meant to graft his family into the Froidfonds. He often told me as much. Oh! he was a shrewd old man, this old man Grandet."

"Ah! Nanon," Eugénie said one evening, as she went to bed, "why has he not once written to me in seven years!——"

While these events were taking place in Saumur, Charles was making his fortune in the East. His first venture was very successful. He had promptly realized the sum of six thousand dollars. Crossing the line had cured him of many early prejudices; he soon saw very clearly that the best and quickest way of making money was the same in the tropics as in Europe—by buying and selling men. He made a descent on the African coasts and bargained for negroes and other goods in demand in various markets. He threw himself heart and soul into his business, and thought of nothing else. He set one clear aim before him, to reappear in Paris, and to dazzle the world there with his wealth, to attain a position even higher than the one from which he had fallen.

By dint of rubbing shoulders with many men, traveling in many lands, coming in contact with various customs and religions, his code had been relaxed, and he had grown sceptical. His notions of right and wrong became less rigid when he found that what was looked upon as a crime in one country was held up to admiration in another. He saw that every

one was working for himself, that disinterestedness was rarely to be met with, and grew selfish and suspicious ; the hereditary failings of the Grandets came out in him—the hardness, the shiftiness, and the greed of gain. He sold Chinese coolies, negro slaves, swallow-nests, children, artists, and anything and everything that brought in money. He became a money-lender on a large scale. Long practice in cheating the custom authorities had made him unscrupulous in other ways. He would make the voyage to St. Thomas, buy booty of the pirates there for a low price, and sell the merchandise in the dearest market.

During his first voyage Eugénie's pure and noble face had been with him, like the image of the Virgin which Spanish sailors set on the prows of their vessels ; he had attributed his first success to a kind of magical efficacy possessed by her prayers and vows ; but as time went on, the women of other countries, negresses, mulattoes, white skins, and yellow skins, orgies and adventures in many lands, completely effaced all recollection of his cousin, of Saumur, of the old house, of the bench, and of the kiss that he had snatched in the passage. He remembered nothing but the little garden shut in by its crumbling walls where he had learned the fate that lay in store for him ; but he rejected all connection with the family. His uncle was an old fox who had filched his jewels. Eugénie had no place in his heart, he never gave her a thought ; but she occupied a page in his ledger as a creditor for six thousand francs.

Such conduct and such ideas explained Charles Grandet's silence. In the East Indies, at St. Thomas, on the coast of Africa, at Lisbon, in the United States, Charles Grandet the adventurer was known as Carl Sepherd, a pseudonym which he assumed so as not to compromise his real name. Carl Sepherd could be indefatigable, brazen, and greedy of gain ; could conduct himself, in short, like a man who resolves to make a fortune *quibuscumque viis*, and makes haste to have

done with villainy as soon as possible, in order to live respected for the rest of his days.

With such methods his career of prosperity was rapid and brilliant, and in 1827 he returned to Bordeaux on board the *Marie Caroline*, a fine brig belonging to a Royalist firm. He had nineteen hundred thousand francs with him in gold dust, carefully secreted in three strong casks ; he hoped to sell it to the Paris mint, and to make eight per cent. on the transaction. There was also on board the brig a gentleman-in-ordinary to his majesty Charles X., a M. d'Aubrion, a worthy old man who had been rash enough to marry a woman of fashion whose money came from estates in the West India Islands. Mme. d'Aubrion's reckless extravagance had obliged him to go out to the Indies to sell her property. M. and Mme. d'Aubrion, of the house of d'Aubrion de Buch, which had lost its *captal* or chieftain just before the Revolution, were now in straitened circumstances. They had a bare twenty thousand francs of income and a daughter, a very plain girl, whom her mother made up her mind to marry without a dowry ; for life in Paris is expensive, and, as has been seen, their means were reduced. It was an enterprise the success of which might have seemed somewhat problematical to a man of the world, in spite of the cleverness with which a woman of fashion is generally credited. Perhaps even Mme. d'Aubrion herself, when she looked at her daughter, was almost ready to despair of getting rid of her to any one, even to the most besotted worshiper of rank and titles.

Mlle. d'Aubrion was a tall, spare demoiselle, somewhat like her namesake the insect ; she had a disdainful mouth, overshadowed by a long nose, thick at the tip, sallow in its normal condition, but very red after a meal, an organic change which was all the more unpleasant by reason of contrast with a pallid, insipid countenance. From some points of view she was all that a worldly mother, who was thirty-eight years of age, and had still some pretensions to beauty, could desire.

But by way of compensating advantages, the Marquise d'Aubrion's distinguished air had been inherited by her daughter, and that young lady had been submitted to a Spartan regimen, which for the time being subdued the offending hue in her feature to a reasonable flesh-tint. Her mother had taught her how to dress herself. Under the same instructor she had acquired a charming manner, and had learned to assume that pensive expression which interests a man and leads him to imagine that here, surely, is the angel for whom he has hitherto sought in vain. She was carefully drilled in a certain manœuvre with her foot—to let it peep forth from beneath her petticoat, and so call attention to its small size—whenever her nose became unseasonably red; indeed, the mother had made the very best of her daughter. By means of large sleeves, stiff skirts, puffs, padding, and high-pressure corsets she had produced a highly curious and interesting result, a specimen of femininity which ought to have been put into a museum for the edification of mothers generally.

Charles became very intimate with Mme. d'Aubrion; the lady had her own reasons for encouraging him. People said that during the time on board she left no stone unturned to secure such a prize for a son-in-law. It is at any rate certain that when they landed at Bordeaux Charles stayed in the same hotel with M., Mme., and Mlle. d'Aubrion, and they all traveled together to Paris. The hôtel d'Aubrion was hampered with mortgages, and Charles was intended to come to the rescue. The mother had gone so far as to say that it would give her great pleasure to establish a son-in-law on the ground floor. She did not share M. d'Aubrion's aristocratic prejudices, and promised Charles Grandet to obtain letters patent from that easy-tempered monarch, Charles X., which should authorize him, Grandet, to bear the name and assume the arms of the d'Aubrions, and (by purchasing the entail) to succeed to the property of Aubrion, which was worth about thirty-six thousand livres a year, to say nothing of the titles

of Captal de Buch and Marquis d'Aubrion. They could be very useful to each other, in short; and what with this arrangement of a joint establishment, and one or two posts about the Court, the hôtel d'Aubrion might count upon an income of a hundred thousand francs and more.

"And when a man has a hundred thousand francs a year, a name, a family, and a position at Court—for I shall procure an appointment for you as gentleman-of-the-bedchamber—the rest is easy. You can be anything you choose" (so she instructed Charles), "Master of Requests in the Council of State, Prefect, Secretary to an Embassy, the Ambassador himself if you like. Charles X. is much attached to d'Aubrion; they have known each other from childhood."

She fairly turned his head with these ambitious schemes, and during the voyage Charles began to cherish the hopes and ideas which had been so cleverly insinuated in the form of tender confidences. He never doubted but that his uncle had paid his father's creditors; he had been suddenly launched into the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, at that time the goal of social ambition; and beneath the shadow of Mlle. Mathilde's purple nose, he was shortly to appear as the Comte d'Aubrion, very much as the Dreux shone forth transformed into Brézés. He was dazzled by the apparent prosperity of the restored dynasty, which had seemed to be tottering to its fall when he left France; his head was full of wild ambitious dreams, which began on the voyage, and did not leave him in Paris. He resolved to strain every nerve to reach those pinnacles of glory which his egotistical would-be mother-in-law had pointed out to him. His cousin was only a dim speck in the remote past; she had no place in this brilliant future, no part in his dreams, but he went to see Annette. That experienced woman of the world gave counsel to her old friend; he must by no means let slip such an opportunity for an alliance; she promised to aid him in all his schemes of advancement. In her heart she was delighted to see Charles thus secured to

such a plain and uninteresting girl. He had grown very attractive during his stay in the Indies; his complexion had grown darker, he had gained in manliness and self-possession; he spoke in the firm, decided tones of a man who is used to command and to success. Ever since Charles Grandet had discovered that there was a definite part for him to play in Paris, he was himself at once.

Des Grassins, hearing of his return, his approaching marriage, and his large fortune, came to see him, and spoke of the three hundred thousand francs still owing to his father's creditors. He found Charles closeted with a goldsmith, from whom he had ordered jewels for Mlle. d'Aubrion's present, and who was submitting designs. Charles himself had brought magnificent diamonds from the Indies; but the cost of setting them, together with the silver plate and jewelry of the new establishment, amounted to more than two hundred thousand francs. He did not recognize des Grassins at first, and treated him with the cool insolence of a young man of fashion who is conscious that he has killed four men in as many duels in the Indies. As M. des Grassins had already called three or four times, Charles vouchsafed to hear him, but it was with bare politeness, and he did not pay the slightest attention to what the banker said.

"My father's debts are not mine," he said coolly. "I am obliged to you, sir, for the trouble you have been good enough to take, but I am none the better for it that I can see. I have not scraped together a couple of millions, earned with the sweat of my brow, to fling it to my father's creditors at this late day."

"But suppose that your father were to be declared bankrupt in a few days' time?"

"In a few days' time I shall be the Comte d'Aubrion, sir; so you can see that it is a matter of entire indifference to me. Besides, you know even better than I do that when a man has a hundred thousand livres a year, his

father never has been a bankrupt," and he politely edged the deputy des Grassins to the door.

In the early days of the month of August, in that same year, Eugénie was sitting on the little bench in the garden where her cousin had sworn eternal love, and where she often took breakfast in summer mornings. The poor girl was almost happy for a few brief moments; she went over all the great and little events of her love before those catastrophes that followed. The morning was fresh and bright, and the garden was full of sunlight; her eyes wandered over the wall with its moss and flowers; it was full of cracks now, and all but in ruins, but no one was allowed to touch it, though Cornoiller was always prophesying to his wife that the whole thing would come down and crush somebody or other one of these days. The postman knocked at the door, and gave a letter into the hands of Mme. Cornoiller, who hurried into the garden, crying, "Mademoiselle! A letter! Is it *the* letter?" she added, as she handed it to her mistress.

The words rang through Eugénie's heart as the spoken sounds rang from the ramparts and the old garden wall.

"Paris!——It is his writing! Then he has come back."

Eugénie's face grew white; for several seconds she kept the seal unbroken, for her heart beat so fast that she could neither move nor see. Big Nanon stood and waited with both hands on her hips; joy seemed to puff like smoke from every wrinkle in her brown face.

"Do read it, mademoiselle!"

"Oh! why does he come back by way of Paris, Nanon, when he went by way of Saumur?"

"Read it; the letter will tell you why."

Eugénie's fingers trembled as she opened the envelope; a check on the firm of "Mme. des Grassins et Corret, Saumur," fell out of it and fluttered down. Nanon picked it up.

"My dear Cousin——"

("I am not 'Eugénie' now," she thought, and her heart stood still.) "You——"

"He used to say *thou!*" She folded her arms and dreaded to read any further; great tears gathered in her eyes.

"What is it? Is he dead?" asked Nanon.

"If he were, he could not write," said Eugénie, and she read the letter through. It ran as follows:

"My dear Cousin:—You will, I am sure, hear with pleasure of the success of my enterprise. You brought me luck; I have come back to France a wealthy man, as my uncle advised. I have just heard of his death, together with that of my aunt, from M. des Grassins. Our parents must die in the course of nature, and we ourselves must follow them. I hope that by this time you are consoled for your loss; time cures all trouble, as I know by experience. Yes, my dear cousin, the day of illusions has gone by for me. I am sorry, but it cannot be helped. I have knocked about the world so much, and seen so much, that I have been led to reflect on life. I was a child when I went away; I have come back a man, and I have many things to think about now which I did not even dream of then. You are free, my cousin, and I too am free still; there is apparently nothing to hinder the realization of our youthful hopes, but I am too straightforward to hide my present situation from you. I have not for a moment forgotten that I am bound to you; through all my wanderings I have always remembered the little wooden bench——"

Eugénie started up as if she were sitting on burning coals, and sat down on one of the broken stone steps in the yard.

—"the little wooden bench where we vowed to love each other for ever; the passage, the gray parlor, my attic room,

the night when in your thoughtfulness and tact you made my future easier to me. Yes, these memories have been my support; I have said in my heart that you were always thinking of me when I thought of you at the hour we had agreed upon. Did you not look out into the darkness at nine o'clock? Yes, I am sure you did. I would not prove false to so sacred a friendship; I cannot deal insincerely with you.

"A marriage has been proposed to me, which is in every way satisfactory to my mind. Love in a marriage is romantic nonsense. Experience has clearly shown me that in marrying we must obey social laws and conform to conventional ideas. There is some difference of age between you and me, which would perhaps be more likely to affect your future than mine, and there are other differences of which I need not speak; your bringing up, your ways of life, and your tastes have not fitted you for Parisian life, nor would they harmonize with the future which I have marked out for myself. For instance, it is a part of my plan to maintain a great household, and to see a good deal of society; and you, I am sure, from my recollections of you, would prefer a quiet, domestic life and home-keeping ways. No, I will be open with you; I will abide by your decision; but I must first, however, lay all the facts of the case before you, that you may the better judge.

"I possess at the time of writing an income of eighty thousand livres. With this fortune I am able to marry into the d'Aubrion family; I should take their name on my marriage with their only daughter, a girl of nineteen, and secure at the same time a very brilliant position in society, and the post of gentleman-of-the-bedchamber. I will assure you at once, my dear cousin, that I have not the slightest affection for Mlle. d'Aubrion, but by this marriage I shall secure for my children a social rank which will be of inestimable value in the future. Monarchical principles are daily gaining ground. A few years hence my son, the Marquis d'Aubrion, would have an entailed

estate and a yearly rental of forty thousand livres; with such advantages there would be no position to which he might not aspire. We ought to live for our children.

"You see, my cousin, how candidly I am laying the state of my heart, my hopes, and my fortunes before you. Perhaps after seven years of separation you may yourself have forgotten our childish love affair, but I have never forgotten your goodness or my promise. A less conscientious, a less upright man, with a heart less youthful than mine, might scarcely feel himself bound by it; but for me a promise, however lightly given, is sacred. When I tell you plainly that my marriage is solely a marriage of suitability, and that I have not forgotten the love of our youthful days, am I not putting myself entirely into your hands, and making you the arbitress of my fate? Is it not implied that if I must renounce my social ambitions, I shall willingly content myself with the simple and pure happiness which is always called up by the thought of you——"

"Tra-la-la-tan-ta-ti!" sang Charles Grandet to the air of *Non più andrai,* as he signed himself,

"Your devoted cousin,

"CHARLES."

"By Jove! that is acting handsomely," he said to himself. He looked about him for the cheque, slipped it in, and added a postscript.

"*P.S.*—I enclose a cheque on Mme. des Grassins for eight thousand francs, payable in gold to your order, comprising the capital and interest of the sum you were so kind to advance me. I am expecting a case from Bordeaux which contains a few things which you must allow me to send you as a token of my unceasing gratitude. You can send my dressing-case by the diligence to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, Rue Hillerin-Bertin."

"By the diligence!" cried Eugénie, "when I would have given my life for it a thousand times!"

Terrible and complete shipwreck of hope; the vessel had gone down, there was not a spar, not a plank in the vast ocean. There are women who when their lover forsakes them will drag him from a rival's arms and murder her, and fly for refuge to the ends of the earth, to the scaffold, or the grave. There is a certain grandeur in this no doubt; there is something so sublime in the passion of indignation which prompts the crime, that man's justice is awed into silence; but there are other women who suffer and bow their heads. They go on their way, submissive and broken-hearted, weeping and forgiving, praying till their last sigh for him whom they never forget. And this no less is love, love such as the angels know, love that bears itself proudly in anguish, that lives by the secret pain of which it dies at last. This was to be Eugénie's love now that she had read that horrible letter.

She raised her eyes to the sky and thought of her mother's prophetic words, uttered in the moment of clear vision that is sometimes given to dying eyes; and as she thought of her mother's life and death, it seemed to her that she was looking out over her own future. There was nothing left to her now but to live prayerfully till the day of her deliverance should come and the soul spread its wings for heaven.

"My mother was right," she said, weeping. "Suffer—and die."

She went slowly from the garden into the house, avoiding the passage; but when she came into the old gray parlor, it was full of memories of her cousin. On the chimney-piece there stood a certain china saucer, which she used every morning, and the old Sèvres sugar basin.

It was to be a memorable and eventful day for Eugénie. Nanon announced the curé of the parish church. He was related to the Cruchots, and therefore in the interests of the President de Bonfons. For some days past the Abbé had

urged the curé to speak seriously to Mlle. Grandet about the duty of marriage from a religious point of view for a woman in her position. Eugénie, seeing her pastor, fancied that he had come for the thousand francs which she gave him every month for the poor of his parish, and sent Nanon for the money; but the curate began with a smile, "To-day, mademoiselle, I have come to take counsel with you about a poor girl in whom all Saumur takes an interest, and who, through lack of charity to herself, is not living as a Christian should."

"*Mon Dieu!* M. le Curé, just now I can think of nobody but myself. I am very miserable, my only refuge is in the Church; her heart is large enough to hold all human sorrows, her love so inexhaustible that we need never fear to drain it dry."

"Well, mademoiselle, when we speak of this girl, we shall speak of you. Listen! If you would fain work out your salvation, there are but two ways open to you: you must either leave the world or live in the world and submit to its laws —you must choose between the earthly and the heavenly vocation."

"Ah! your voice speaks to me when I need to hear a voice. Yes, God has sent you to me. I will bid the world farewell, and live for God alone, in silence and seclusion."

"But, my daughter, you should think long and prayerfully before taking so strong a measure. Marriage is life; the veil and the convent is death."

"Yes, death. Ah! if death would only come quickly, M. le Curé," she said, with dreadful eagerness.

"Death? But you have great obligations to fulfill towards society, mademoiselle. There is your family of poor, to whom you give clothes and firing in winter and work in summer. Your great fortune is a loan, of which you must give account one day. You have always looked on it as a sacred trust. It would be selfish to bury yourself in a convent, and you ought not to live alone in the world. In the first place, how can you endure the burden of your vast fortune alone? You

might lose it. You will be involved in endless litigation; you will find yourself in difficulties from which you will not be able to extricate yourself. Take your pastor's word, a husband is useful; you ought not to lose what God has given into your charge. I speak to you as to a cherished lamb of my flock. You love God too sincerely to find hindrances to your salvation in the world; you are one of its fairest ornaments, and should remain in it as an example of holiness."

At this point Mme. des Grassins was announced. The banker's wife was smarting under a grievous disappointment, and thirsted for revenge.

"Mademoiselle——" she began. "Oh! M. le Curé is here——I will say no more then. I came to speak about some matters of business, but I see you are deep in something else."

"Madame," said the curé, "I leave the field to you."

"Oh! M. le Curé, pray come back again; I stand in great need of your help just now."

"Yes, indeed, my poor child!" said Mme. des Grassins.

"What do you mean?" asked Eugénie and the curé both together.

"Do you suppose that I haven't heard that your cousin has come back, and is going to marry Mlle. d'Aubrion? A woman doesn't go about with her wits in her pocket."

Eugénie was silent, there was a red flush on her face, but she made up her mind at once that henceforward no one should learn anything from her, and looked as impenetrable as her father used to do.

"Well, madame," she said, with a tinge of bitterness in her tones, "it seems that I, at any rate, carry my wits in my pocket, for I am quite at a loss to understand you. Speak out and explain yourself; you can speak freely before M. le Curé, he is my director, as you know."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, see for yourself what des Grassins says. Here is the letter."

Eugénie read:

"MY DEAR WIFE:—Charles Grandet has returned from the Indies, and has been in Paris these two months——"

"Two months!" said Eugénie to herself, and her hand fell to her side. After a moment she went on reading:

"I had to dance attendance on him, and called twice before the future Comte d'Aubrion would condescend to see me. All Paris is talking about his marriage, and the banns are published——"

"And he wrote to me after that?" Eugénie said to herself. She did not round off the sentence as a Parisienne would have done, with "Wretch that he is!" but her scorn was not one whit the less because it was unexpressed.

—"but it will be a good while yet before he marries; it is not likely that the Marquis d'Aubrion will give his daughter to the son of a bankrupt wine merchant. I called and told him of all the trouble we had been at, his uncle and I, in the matter of his father's failure, and of our clever dodges that had kept the creditors quiet so far. The insolent puppy had the effrontery to say to me—to *me*, who for five years have toiled day and night in his interest and to save his credit—that *his father's affairs were not his!* A solicitor would have wanted thirty or forty thousand francs of him in fees at the rate of one per cent. on the total of the debt! But, patience! There is something that he does owe, however, and that the law shall make him pay, that is to say, twelve hundred thousand francs to his father's creditors, and I shall declare his father bankrupt. I mixed myself up in this affair on the word of that old crocodile of a Grandet, and I have given promises in the name of the family. M. le Comte d'Aubrion may not care for his honor, but I care a good deal for mine! So I

shall just explain my position to the creditors. Still, I have too much respect for Mlle. Eugénie (with whom, in happier days, we hoped to be more closely connected) to take any steps before you have spoken to her——"

There Eugénie paused, and quietly returned the letter.

"I am obliged to you," she said to Mme. des Grassins. "*We shall see*——"

"Your voice was exactly like your father's just then," exclaimed Mme. des Grassins.

"Madame," put in Nanon, producing Charles' cheque, "you have eight thousand francs to pay us."

"True. Be so good as to come with me, Mme. Cornoiller."

"M. le Curé," said Eugénie, with a noble composure that came of the thought which prompted her, "would it be a sin to remain in a state of virginity after marriage?"

"It is a case of conscience which I cannot solve. If you care to know what the celebrated Sanchez says in his great work, *De Matrimonio*, I could inform you to-morrow."

The curé took leave. Mlle. Grandet went up to her father's room and spent the day there by herself; she would not even come down to dinner, though Nanon begged and scolded. She appeared in the evening at the hour when the usual company began to arrive. The gray parlor in the Grandet's house had never been so well filled as it was that night. Every soul in the town knew by that time of Charles' return, and of his faithlessness and ingratitude; but their inquisitive curiosity was not to be gratified. Eugénie was a little late, but no one saw any traces of the cruel agitation through which she had passed; she could smile benignly in reply to the compassionate looks and words which some of the group thought fit to bestow on her; she bore her pain behind a mask of politeness.

About nine o'clock the card-players drew away from the

tables, paid their losses, and criticised the game and the various points that had been made. Just as there was a general move in the direction of the door, an unexpected development took place; the news of it rang through Saumur and four prefectures round about for days after.

"Please stay, M. le Président."

There was not a person in the room who did not thrill with excitement at the words; M. de Bonfons, who was about to take his cane, turned quite white, and sat down again.

"The President takes the millions," said Mlle. de Gribeaucourt.

"It is quite clear that President de Bonfons is going to marry Mlle. Grandet," cried Mme. d'Orsonval.

"The best trick of the game!" commented the Abbé.

"A very pretty *slam*," said the notary.

Every one said his say and cut his joke, every one thought of the heiress mounted upon her millions as if she were on a pedestal. Here was the catastrophe of the drama, begun nine years ago, taking place under their eyes. To tell the President in the face of all Saumur to "stay" was as good as announcing at once that she meant to take the magistrate for her husband. Social conventionalities are rigidly observed in little country towns, and such an infraction as this was looked upon as a binding promise.

"M. le Président," Eugénie began in an unsteady voice, as soon as they were alone, "I know what you care about in me. Swear to leave me free till the end of my life, to claim none of the rights which marriage will give you over me, and my hand is yours. Oh!" she said, seeing him about to fall on his knees, "I have not finished yet. I must tell you frankly that there are memories in my heart which can never be effaced; that friendship is all that I can give my husband; I wish neither to affront him nor to be disloyal to my own heart. But you shall only have my hand and fortune at the price of an immense service which I want you to do me."

"Anything, I will do anything," said the president.

"Here are fifteen hundred thousand francs, M. le Président," she said, drawing from her bodice a certificate for a hundred shares in the Bank of France; "will you set out for Paris? You must not even wait till the morning, but go at once, to-night. You must go straight to M. des Grassins, ask him for a list of my uncle's creditors, call them together, and discharge all outstanding claims upon Guillaume Grandet's estate. Let the creditors have capital and interest at five per cent. from the day the debts were contracted to the present time; and see that in every case a receipt in full is given, and that it is made out in proper form. You are a magistrate, you are the only person whom I feel that I can trust in such a case. You are a gentleman and a man of honor; you have given me your word, and, protected by your name, I will make the perilous voyage of life. We shall know how to make allowances for each other, for we have been acquainted for so long that it is almost as if we were related, and I am sure you would not wish to make me unhappy."

The president fell on his knees at the feet of the rich heiress in a paroxysm of joy.

"I will be your slave!" he said.

"When all the receipts are in your possession, sir," she went on, looking quietly at him, "you must take them, together with the bills, to my cousin Grandet, and give them to him with this letter. When you come back, I will keep my word."

The president understood the state of affairs perfectly well. "She is accepting me out of pique," he thought, and he hastened to do Mlle. Grandet's bidding with all possible speed, for fear some chance might bring about a reconciliation between the lovers.

As soon as M. de Bonfons left her, Eugénie sank into her chair and burst into tears. All was over, and *this* was the end.

The president traveled post-haste to Paris and reached his journey's end on the following evening. The next morning he went to des Grassins, and arranged for a meeting of the creditors in the office of the notary with whom the bills had been deposited. Every man of them appeared, every man of them was punctual to a moment—one should give even creditors their dues.

M. de Bonfons, in Mlle. Grandet's name, paid down the money in full, both capital and interest. They were paid interest! It was an amazing portent, a nine days' wonder in the business world of Paris. After the whole affair had been wound up, and when, by Eugénie's desire, des Grassins had received fifty thousand francs for his services, the president betook himself to the Hôtel d'Aubrion, and was lucky enough to find Charles at home, and in disgrace with his future father-in-law. The old Marquis had just informed that gentleman that until Guillaume Grandet's creditors were satisfied, a marriage with his daughter was not to be thought of.

To Charles, thus despondent, the president delivered the following letter:

"DEAR COUSIN:—M. le Président de Bonfons has undertaken to hand you a discharge of all claims against my uncle's estate, and to deliver it in person, together with this letter, so that I may know that it is safely in your hands. I heard rumors of bankruptcy, and it occurred to me that difficulties might possibly arise as a consequence in the matter of your marriage with Mlle. d'Aubrion. Yes, cousin, you are quite right about my tastes and manners; I have lived, as you say, so entirely out of the world that I know nothing of its ways or its calculations, and my companionship could never make up to you for the loss of the pleasures that you look to find in society. I hope that you will be happy according to the social conventions to which you have sacrificed our early love. The only thing in my power to give you to complete your happi-

ness is your father's good name. Farewell; you will always find a faithful friend in your cousin, EUGÉNIE."

In spite of himself an exclamation broke from the man of social ambitions when his eyes fell on the discharge and receipts. The president smiled.

"We can each announce our marriage," said he.

"Oh! you are to marry Eugénie, are you? Well, I am glad to hear it; she is a kind-hearted girl. Why!" struck with a sudden luminous idea, "she must be rich?"

"Four days ago she had about nineteen millions," the president said, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "to-day she has only seventeen."

Charles was dumfounded; he stared at the president.

"Seventeen mil——"

"Seventeen millions. Yes, sir; when we are married, Mlle. Grandet and I shall muster seven hundred and fifty thousand livres a year between us."

"My dear cousin," said Charles, with some return of assurance, "we shall be able to push each other's fortunes."

"Certainly," said the president. "There is something else here," he added, "a little case that I was to give only in your hands," and he set down a box containing the dressing-case upon the table.

The door opened, and in came Mme. la Marquise d'Aubrion; the great lady seemed to be unaware of Cruchot's existence. "Look here! dear," she said, "never mind what that absurd M. d'Aubrion has been saying to you; the Duchesse de Chaulieu has quite turned his head. I repeat it, there is nothing to prevent your marriage——"

"Nothing, madame," answered Charles. "The three millions which my father owed were paid yesterday."

"In money?" she asked.

"In full, capital and interest; I mean to rehabilitate his memory."

"What nonsense!" cried Mme. la Marquise d'Aubrion. "Who is this person?" she asked in Charles' ear, as she saw Cruchot for the first time.

"My man of business," he answered in a low voice. The Marquise gave M. de Bonfons a disdainful bow, and left the room.

"We are beginning to push each other's fortunes already," said the president dryly, as he took up his hat. "Good-day, cousin."

"The old cockatoo from Saumur is laughing at me; I have a great mind to make him swallow six inches of cold steel," thought Charles.

But the president had departed.

Three days later M. de Bonfons was back in Saumur again, and announced his marriage with Eugénie. After about six months he received his appointment as Councilor to the Court-Royal at Angers, and they went thither. But before Eugénie left Saumur she melted down the trinkets that had long been so sacred and so dear a trust, and gave them, together with the eight thousand francs which her cousin had returned to her, to make a reredos for the altar in the parish church whither she had gone so often to pray to God for him. Henceforward her life was spent partly at Angers, partly at Saumur. Her husband's devotion to the government at a political crisis was rewarded; he was made President of the Chamber, and finally First President. Then he awaited a general election with impatience; he had visions of a place in the government; he had dreams of a peerage; and then, and then——

"Then he would call cousins with the king, I suppose?" said Nanon, big Nanon, Mme. Cornoiller, wife of a burgess of Saumur, when her mistress told her of these lofty ambitions and high destinies.

Yet, after all, none of these ambitious dreams were to be real-

ized, and the name of M. de Bonfons (he had finally dropped the patronymic Cruchot) was to undergo no further transformation. He died only eight days after his appointment as deputy of Saumur. God, who sees all hearts, and who never strikes without cause, punished him, doubtless, for his presumptuous schemes, and for the lawyer's cunning with which, *accurante Cruchot*, he drafted his own marriage contract; in which husband and wife, *in case there was no issue of the marriage, bequeathed to each other all their property, both real estate and personalty, without exception or reservation, dispensing even with the formality of an inventory, provided that the omission of the said inventory should not injure their heirs and assigns, it being understood that this deed of gift, etc., etc.*, a clause which may throw some light on the profound respect with which the president constantly showed for his wife's desire to live apart. Women cited M. le Premier Président as one of the most delicately considerate of men, and pitied him, and often went so far as to blame Eugénie for clinging to her passion and her sorrow; mingling, according to their wont, cruel insinuations with their criticisms of the president's wife.

"If Mme. de Bonfons lives apart from her husband, she must be in very bad health, poor thing. Is she likely to recover? What can be the matter with her? Is it cancer or gastritis, or what is it? Why does she not go to Paris and see some specialist? She has looked very sallow for a long time past. How can she not wish to have a child? They say she is very fond of her husband; why not give him an heir in his position? Do you know, it is really dreadful! If it is only some notion which she has taken into her head, it is unpardonable. Poor president!"

There is a certain keen insight and quick apprehensiveness that is the gift of a lonely and meditative life—and loneliness, and sorrow, and the discipline of the last few years had given Eugénie this clairvoyance of the narrow lot. She knew within herself that the president was anxious for her death

that he might be the sole possessor of the colossal fortune, now still further increased by the deaths of the Abbé and the notary, whom Providence had lately seen fit to promote from works to rewards. The poor solitary woman understood and pitied the president. Unworthy hopes and selfish calculations were his strongest motives for respecting Eugénie's hopeless passion. To give life to a child would be death to the egoistical dreams and ambitions that the president hugged within himself; was it for all these things that his career was cut short? while she must remain in her prison house, and the coveted gold for which she cared so little was to be heaped upon her. It was she who was to live, with the thought of heaven always before her, and holy thoughts for her companions, to give help and comfort secretly to those who were in distress. Mme. de Bonfons was left a widow three years after her marriage, with an income of eight hundred thousand livres.

She is beautiful still, with the beauty of a woman who is nearly forty years of age. Her face is very pale and quiet now, and there is a tinge of sadness in the low tones of her voice. She has simple manners, all the dignity of one who has passed through great sorrows, and the saintliness of a soul unspotted by the world; and, no less, the rigidness of an old maid, the little penurious ways and narrow ideas of a dull country town.

Although she has eight hundred thousand livres a year, she lives just as she used to do in the days of stinted allowances of fuel and food while she was still Eugénie Grandet; the fire is never lighted in the parlor before or after the dates fixed by her father, all the regulations in force in the days of her girlhood are still adhered to. She dresses as her mother did. That cold, sunless, dreary house, always overshadowed by the dark ramparts, is like her own life.

She looks carefully after her affairs; her wealth accumulates from year to year; perhaps she might even be called parsi-

monious, if it were not for the noble use she makes of her fortune. Various pious and charitable institutions, alms-houses, and orphan asylums, a richly endowed public library, and donations to various churches in Saumur, are a sufficient answer to the charge of avarice which some few people have brought against her.

They sometimes speak of her in joke as *mademoiselle*, but, in fact, people stand somewhat in awe of Mme. de Bonfons. It was as if she, whose heart went out so readily to others, was always to be the victim of their interested calculations, and to be cut off from them by a barrier of distrust; as if for all warmth and brightness in her life she was to find only the pale glitter of metal.

"No one loves me but you," she would sometimes say to Nanon.

Yet her hands are always ready to bind the wounds that other eyes do not see, in any house; and her way to heaven is one long succession of kindness and good deeds. The real greatness of her soul has risen above the cramping influences of her early life. And this is the life-history of a woman who dwells in the world, yet is not of it; a woman so grandly fitted to be a wife and mother, but who has neither husband nor children nor kindred.

Of late the good folk of Saumur have begun to talk of a second marriage for her. Rumor is busy with her name and that of the Marquis de Froidfond; indeed, his family have begun to surround the rich widow, just as the Cruchots once flocked about Eugénie Grandet. Nanon and Cornoiller, so it is said, are in the interest of the Marquis, but nothing could be more false; for big Nanon and Cornoiller have neither of them wit enough to understand the corruptions of the world.

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THE MARANAS.

(*Les Marana.*)

To Madame la Comtesse Merlin.

In spite of the discipline enforced by Marshal Suchet in the division he commanded in the Peninsular War, all his efforts could not restrain an outbreak of license and tumult at the taking of Taragona. Indeed, according to trustworthy military authorities, the intoxication of victory resulted in something very like a sack of the town. Pillage was promptly put down by the marshal; and as soon as order was restored, a commandant appointed, the military administrators appeared upon the scene, and the town began to wear a nondescript aspect—the organization was French, but the Spanish population was left free to follow *in petto* its own national customs. It would be a task of no little difficulty to determine the exact duration of the pillage, but its cause (like that of most sublunary events) is sufficiently easy to discover.

In the marshal's division of the army there was a regiment composed almost entirely of Italians, commanded by a certain Colonel Eugène, a man of extraordinary valor, a second Murat, who, having come to the trade of war too late, had gained no Grand Duchy of Berg, no Kingdom of Naples, nor a ball through the heart at Pizzo. But if he had received no crown, his chances of receiving bullets were admirably good; and it would have been in no wise astonishing if he had had more than one of them. This regiment was made up from the wrecks of the Italian Legion, which is in Italy very much what the colonial battalions are in France. Stationed on the isle of Elba, it had provided an honorable way out of the

difficulty experienced by families with regard to the future of unmanageable sons, as well as a career for those great men spoiled in the making, whom society is too ready to brand as bad subjects. All of them were men misunderstood, for the most part—men who may become heroes if a woman's smile raises them out of the beaten track of glory; or terrible after an orgy, when some ugly suggestion, dropped by a boon companion, has gained possession of their minds.

Napoleon had enrolled these men of energy in the Sixth Regiment of the line, hoping to metamorphose them into generals, with due allowance for the gaps to be made in their ranks by bullets; but the Emperor's estimate of the ravages of death proved more correct than the rest of his calculations. It was often decimated, but its character remained the same; and the Sixth acquired a name for splendid bravery in the field, and the very worst reputation in private life.

These Italians had lost their captain during the siege of Taragona. He was the famous Bianchi who had laid a wager during the campaign that he would eat a Spanish sentinel's heart—and won his bet. The story of this pleasantry of the camp is told elsewhere in the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne;" therein will be found certain details which corroborate what has been said here concerning the legion. Bianchi, the prince of those fiends incarnate who had earned the double reputation of the regiment, possessed the chivalrous sense of honor which in the army covers a multitude of the wildest excesses. In a word, had he lived a few centuries earlier, he would have made a gallant buccaneer. Only a few days before he fell, he had distinguished himself by such conspicuous courage in action, that the marshal sought to recognize it. Bianchi had refused promotion, pension, or a fresh decoration, and asked as a favor to be allowed to mount the first scaling-ladder at the assault of Taragona as his sole reward. The marshal granted the request, and forgot his promise; but Bianchi himself put him in mind of it and of Bianchi, for the berserker

captain was the first to plant the flag of France upon the wall; and there he fell, killed by a monk.

This historical digression is necessary to explain how it came to pass that the Sixth Regiment of the line was the first to enter Taragona, and how the tumult, sufficiently natural after a town has been carried by storm, degenerated so quickly into an attempt to sack it. Moreover, among these men of iron, there were two officers, otherwise but little remarkable, who were destined by force of circumstances to play an important part in this story.

The first of these, a captain on the clothing establishment—half-civilian, half-officer—was generally said, in soldierly language, to "take good care of number one."

Outside of his regiment he was wont to swagger and brag of his connection with it; he would curl his mustache and look a terrible fellow, but his mess had no great opinion of him. His money was the secret of his valorous discretion. For a double reason, moreover, he had been nicknamed "Captain of the Ravens;" because, in the first place, he scented the powder a league away; and, in the second, scurried out of range like a bird on the wing; the nickname was likewise a harmless soldier's joke, a personality of which another might have been proud. Captain Montefiore, of the illustrious family of the Montefiori of Milan (though by the law of the kingdom of Italy he might not bear his title), was one of the prettiest fellows in the army. Possibly his beauty may secretly have been additional cause of his prudence on the field of battle. A wound in the face by spoiling his profile, scarring his forehead, or seaming his cheeks, would have spoiled one of the finest heads in Italy, and destroyed the delicate proportions of a countenance such as no woman ever pictured in dreams. In Girodet's picture of the "Revolt of Cairo" there is a young dying Turk who has the same type of face, the same melancholy expression, of which women are nearly always the dupes. The Marchese di Montefiore had property

of his own, but it was entailed, and he had anticipated his income for several years in order to pay for escapades peculiarly Italian and inconceivable in Paris. He had ruined himself by running a theatre in Milan for the special purpose of foisting upon the public a cantatrice who could not sing, but who loved him (so he said) to distraction.

So Montefiore the captain had good prospects, and was in no hurry to risk them for a paltry scrap of red ribbon. If he was no hero, he was at any rate a philosopher; besides, precedents (if it is allowable to make use of parliamentary expressions in this connection), precedents are forthcoming. Did not Philip II. swear during the battle of Saint-Quentin that he would never go under fire again, nor near it, save the faggots of the Inquisition? Did not the Duke of Alva approve the notion that the involuntary exchange of a crown for a cannon-ball was the worst kind of trade in the world? Montefiore, therefore, as a marquis, was of Philip II.'s way of thinking; he was a Philippist in his quality of gay young bachelor, and in other respects quite as astute a politician as Philip II. himself. He comforted himself for his nickname, and for the slight esteem in which he was held by his regiment, with the thought that his comrades were sorry scamps; and even if they should survive this war of extermination, their opinion of him was not likely to gain much credence hereafter. Was not his face as good as a certificate of merit? He saw himself a colonel through some accident of feminine favor; or, by a skillfully effected transition, the captain on the clothing establishment would become an orderly, and the orderly would in turn become the aide-de-camp of some good-natured marshal. The bravery of the uniform and the bravery of the man were all as one to the captain on the clothing establishment. So some broad sheet would one day or other call him "the brave Colonel Montefiore," and so forth. *Then* he would have a hundred thousand scudi a year, he would marry the daughter of a noble house, and no one would dare to

breathe a word against his courage nor to seek to verify his wounds. Finally, it should be stated that Captain Montefiore had a friend in the person of the quartermaster, a Provençal, born in the Nice district, Diard by name.

A friend, be it in the convict's prison or in an artist's garret, is a compensation for many troubles; and Montefiore and Diard, being a pair of philosophers, found compensations for their hard life in companionship in vice, much as two artists will lull the consciousness of their hardships to sleep by hopes of future fame. Both looked at war as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself, and frankly called those who fell, fools for their pains. Chance had made soldiers of both, when they should have been by rights deliberating in a congress round a table covered with a green cloth. Nature had cast Montefiore in the mould of Rizzio, and Diard in the crucible whence she turns out diplomatists. Both possessed the excitable, nervous, half-feminine temperament, which is always energetic, be it in good or evil; always at the mercy of the caprices of the moment, and swayed by an impulse equally unaccountable to commit a crime or to do a generous deed, to act as a hero or as a craven coward. The fate of such natures as these depends at every moment of their lives upon the intensity of the impressions produced upon the nervous system by vehement and short-lived passions.

Diard was a very fair accountant, but not one of the men would have trusted him with his purse, or made him his executor, possibly by reason of the suspicion that the soldier feels of officialdom. The quartermaster's character was not wanting in dash, nor in a certain boyish enthusiasm, which is apt to wear off as a man grows older and reasons and makes forecasts. And for the rest, his humor was variable as the beauty of a blonde can sometimes be. He was a great talker on every subject. He called himself an artist; and, in imitation of two celebrated generals, collected works of art, simply, he asserted, to secure them for posterity. His comrades would

have been hard put to it to say what they really thought of him. Many of them, who were wont to borrow of him at need, fancied that he was rich; but he was a gambler, and a gambler's property cannot be called his own. He played heavily, so did Montefiore, and all the officers played with them; for to man's shame, be it said, plenty of men will meet on terms of equality round a gaming table with others whom they do not respect and will not recognize if they meet them elsewhere. It was Montefiore who had made that bet with Bianchi about the Spaniard's heart.

Montefiore and Diard were among the last to advance to the assault of the place, but they were the first to go forward into the town itself when it was taken. Such things happen in a mélee, and the two friends were old hands. Mutually supported, therefore, they plunged boldly into a labyrinth of narrow dark little streets, each bent upon his own private affairs; the one in search of Madonnas on canvas, and the other of living originals.

In some quarter of Taragona, Diard espied a piece of ecclesiastical architecture, saw that it was the porch of a convent, and that the doors had been forced, and rushed in to restrain the fury of the soldiery. He was not a moment too soon. Two Parisians were about to riddle one of Albani's Virgins with shot, and of these light infantrymen he bought the picture, undismayed by the mustaches with which the zealous iconoclasts had adorned it.

Montefiore, left outside, contemplated the front of a cloth merchant's house opposite the convent. He was looking it up and down, when a corner of a blind was raised, a girl's head peered forth, a glance like a lightning flash answered his, and—a shot was fired at him from the building. Taragona carried by assault, Taragona roused to fury, firing from every window, Taragona outraged, disheveled, and half-naked, with French soldiers pouring through her blazing streets, slaying there and being slain, was surely worth a glance from fearless

Spanish eyes. What was it but a bull-fight on a grander scale? Montefiore forgot the pillaging soldiers, and for a moment heard neither the shrieks, nor the rattle of musketry, nor the dull thunder of the cannon. He, the Italian libertine, tired of Italian beauties, weary of all women, dreaming of an impossible woman because the possible had ceased to have any attraction for him, had never beheld so exquisitely lovely a profile as that of this Spanish girl. The jaded voluptuary, who had squandered his fortune on follies innumerable and on the gratification of a young man's endless desires; the most abominable monstrosity that our society can produce, could still tremble. The bright idea of setting fire to the house instantly flashed through his mind, suggested, doubtless, by the shot from the patriotic cloth merchant's window; but he was alone, and the means of doing it were to seek, fighting was going forward in the market-place, where a few desperate men still defended themselves.

He thought better of it. Diard came out of the convent, Montefiore kept his discovery to himself, and the pair made several excursions through the town together; but on the morrow the Italian was quartered in the cloth merchant's house, a very appropriate arrangement for a captain on the clothing establishment. It promised him the fulfillment of his desire to again see the Spanish girl.

The first floor of the worthy Spaniard's abode consisted of a vast dimly-lighted shop; protected in front, as the old houses in the Rue des Lombards in Paris used to be, by heavy iron bars. Behind the shop lay the parlor, lighted by windows that looked out into an inner yard. It was a large room, redolent of the spirit of the middle ages, with its old dark pictures, old tapestry, and antique brasier. A broad-plumed hat hung from a nail upon the wall above a matchlock used in guerilla warfare, and a heavy brigand's cloak. The kitchen lay immediately beyond this parlor, or living-room, where meals were served and cigars smoked; and Spaniards, talking

round the smouldering brasier, would nurse hot wrath and hatred of the French in their hearts.

Silver jugs and valuable plate stood on the antique buffet, but the room was fitfully and scantily illuminated, so that the daylight scarcely did more than bring out faint sparkles from the brightest objects in the room; all the rest of it, and even the faces of its occupants, were as dark as a Dutch interior. Between the shop itself and this apartment, with its rich subdued tones and old-world aspect, a sufficiently ill-lit staircase led to a warehouse, where it was possible to examine the stuffs by the light from some ingeniously contrived windows. The merchant and his wife occupied the floor above this warehouse, and the apprentice and the maidservant were lodged still higher in the attics immediately beneath the roof. This highest story overhung the street, and was supported by brackets, which gave a quaint look to the house front. On the coming of the officer, the merchant and his wife resigned their rooms to him and went up to these attics, doubtless to avoid friction.

Montefiore gave himself out to be a Spanish subject by birth, a victim to the tyranny of Napoleon, whom he was forced to serve against his will. These half-lies produced the intended effect. He was asked to join the family at meals, as befitted his birth and rank and the name he bore. He had his private reasons for wishing to conciliate the merchant's family. He felt the presence of his madonna, much as the ogre in the fairy tale smelt the tender flesh of little Thumbkin and his brothers; but though he succeeded in winning his host's confidence, the latter kept the secret of the madonna so well that the captain not only saw no sign of the girl's existence during the first day spent beneath the honest Spaniard's roof, but heard no sound that could betray her presence in any part of the dwelling. The old house was, however, almost entirely built of wood; every noise above or below could be heard through the walls and ceilings, and Montefiore

hoped during the silence of the early hours of night to guess the young girl's whereabouts. She was the only daughter of his host and hostess, he thought; probably they had shut her up in the attics, whither they themselves had retired during the military occupation of the town. No indications, however, betrayed the hiding-place of the treasure. The officer might stand with his face glued to the small leaded diamond-shaped panes of the window, looking out into the darkness of the yard below and the grim walls that rose up around it, but no light gleaned from any window save from those of the room overhead, where he could hear the old merchant and his wife talking, coughing, coming, and going. There was not so much even as a shadow of the girl to be seen.

Montefiore was too cunning to risk the future of his passion by prowling about the house of a night, by knocking softly at all the doors, or by other hazardous expedients. His host was a hot patriot, a Spanish father, and an owner of bales of cloth; bound, therefore, in each character to be suspicious. Discovery would be utter ruin, so Montefiore resolved to bide his time patiently, hoping everything from the carelessness of human nature; for if rogues, with the best of reasons for being cautious, will forget themselves in the long run, so still more will honest men.

Next day he discovered a kind of hammock slung in the kitchen—evidently the servant slept there. The apprentice, it seemed, spent the night on the counter in the shop.

At supper-time, on the second day, Montefiore cursed Napoleon till he saw his host's sombre face relax somewhat. The man was a typical, swarthy Spaniard, with a head such as used to be carved on the head of a rebeck. A smile of gleeful hatred lurked among the wrinkles about his wife's mouth. The lamplight and fitful gleams from the brasier filled the stately room with capricious answering reflections. The hostess was just offering a cigarette to their semi-com-

patriot, when Montefiore heard the rustle of a dress, and a chair was overturned behind the tapestry hangings.

"There!" cried the merchant's wife, turning pale, "may all the saints send that no misfortune has befallen us!"

"So you have some one in there, have you?" asked the Italian, who betrayed no sign of emotion.

The merchant let fall some injurious remarks as to girls. His wife, in alarm, opened a secret door, and brought in the Italian's madonna, half-dead with fear. The delighted lover scarcely seemed to notice the girl; but, lest he might overdo the affectation of indifference, he glanced at her, and turning to his host, asked in his mother tongue:

"Is she your daughter, señor?"

Perez de Lagounia (for that was the merchant's name) had had extensive business connections in Genoa, Florence, and Leghorn; he knew Italian, and replied in that language.

"No. If she had been my own daughter, I should have taken fewer precautions, but the child was put into our charge, and I would die sooner than allow the slightest harm to befall her. But what sense can you expect of a girl of eighteen?"

"She is very beautiful," Montefiore said carelessly. He did not look at her again.

"The mother is sufficiently famous for her beauty," answered the merchant. And they continued to smoke and to watch each other.

Montefiore had imposed upon himself the hard task of avoiding the least look that might compromise his attitude of indifference; but as Perez turned his head aside to spit, the Italian stole a glance at the girl, and again those sparkling eyes met his. In that one glance, with the experienced vision that gives to a voluptuary or a sculptor the power of discerning the outlines of the form beneath the draperies, he beheld a masterpiece created to know all the happiness of love. He saw a delicately fair face, which the sun of Spain had slightly tinged with a warm brown, that added to a

seraphically calm expression a flush of pride, a suffused glow beneath the translucent fairness, due, perhaps, to the pure Moorish blood that brought animation and color into it. Her hair, knotted on the crown of her head, fell in thick curls about transparent ears like a child's, surrounding them with dark shadows that made a framework for the white throat with its faint blue veins, in strong contrast with the fiery eyes and the red finely-curved mouth. The petticoat of her country displayed the curving outlines of a figure as pliant as a branch of willow. This was no "Madonna" of Italian painters, but "The Madonna" of Spanish art, the Virgin of Murillo, the only artist daring enough to depict the rapture of the Conception, a delirious flight of the fervid imagination of the boldest and most sensuous of painters. Three qualities were blended in this young girl; any one of them would have sufficed to exalt a woman into a divinity—the purity of the pearl in the depths of the sea, the sublime exaltation of a Saint Theresa, and a voluptuous charm of which she was herself unconscious. Her presence had the power of a talisman. Everything in the ancient room seemed to have grown young to Montefiore's eyes since she entered it. But if the apparition was exquisite, the stay was brief; she was taken back to her mysterious abiding-place, and thither, shortly afterwards, the servant took a light and her supper, without any attempt at concealment.

"You do very wisely to keep her out of sight," said Montefiore in Italian. "I will keep your secret. The deuce! some of our generals would be quite capable of carrying her off by force."

Montefiore, in his intoxication, went so far as to think of marrying the fair unknown. With this idea in his mind, he put some questions to his host. Perez willingly told him the strange chance that had given him his ward; indeed, the prudent Spaniard, knowing Montefiore's rank and name, of which he had heard in Italy, was anxious to confide the story

to his guest, to show how strong were the barriers raised between the young girl and seduction. Although in the good man's talk there was a certain homely eloquence and force in keeping with his simple manner of life, and with that carbine shot at Montefiore from the window, his story will be better given in an abbreviated form.

When the French Republic revolutionized the manners of the inhabitants of the countries which served as the theatre of its wars, a *fille-de-joie*, driven from Venice after the fall of Venice, came to Taragona. Her life had been a tissue of romantic adventure and strange vicissitudes. On no woman belonging to her class had gold been showered so often ; so often the caprice of some great lord, struck with her extraordinary beauty, had heaped jewels upon her, and all the luxuries of wealth, for a time. For her this meant flowers and carriages, pages and tire-women, palaces and pictures, insolent pride, journeys like a progress of Catherine II., the life of an absolute queen, in fact, whose caprices were law, and whose whims were more than obeyed ; and then—suddenly the gold would utterly vanish—how, neither she nor any one else, man of science, physicist, or chemist could tell, and she was returned again to the streets and to poverty, with nothing in the world save her all-powerful beauty. Yet through it all she lived without taking any thought for the past, the present, or the future. Thrown upon the world, and maintained in her extremity by some poor officer, a gambler, adored for his mustache, she would attach herself to him like a dog to his master, and console him for the hardships of a soldier's life, in all of which she shared, sleeping as lightly under the roof of a garret as beneath the richest of silk canopies. Whether she was in Spain or Italy, she punctually adhered to religious observances. More than once she had bidden love "return to-morrow, to-day I am God's."

But this clay in which gold and spices were mingled, this utter recklessness, these storms of passion, the religious faith

lying in the heart like a diamond in the mud, the life begun and ended in the hospital, the continual game of hazard played with the soul and body as its stake; this Alchemy of Life, in short, with vice fanning the flame beneath the crucible in which great careers and fair inheritances and fortune and the honor of illustrious names were melted away; all these were the products of a peculiar genius, faithfully transmitted from mother to daughter from the times of the middle ages. The woman was called *La Marana.* In her family, whose descent since the thirteenth century was reckoned exclusively on the spindle side—the idea, person, authority, nay, the very name of a father, had been absolutely unknown. The name of *Marana* was for her what the dignity of *Stuart* was to the illustrious race of kings of Scotland, a title of honor substituted for the patronymic, when the office became hereditary in their family.

In former times, when France, Spain, and Italy possessed common interests, which at times bound them closely together, and at least as frequently embroiled all three in wars, the word *Marana,* in its widest acceptation, meant a courtesan. In those ages these women had a definite status of which no memory now exists. In France, Ninon de Lenclos and Marion Delorme alone played such a part as the Imperias, the Catalinas, and Maranas who in the preceding centuries exercised the powers of the cassock, the robe, and the sword. There is a church somewhere in Rome built by an Imperia in a fit of penitence, as Rhodope of old once built a pyramid in Egypt. The epithet by which this family of outcasts once was branded became at last their name in earnest, and even something like a patent of nobility for vice, by establishing its antiquity beyond cavil.

But for the La Marana of the nineteenth century there came a day, whether it was a day of splendor or of misery, no man knows, for the problem is a secret between her soul and God; but it was surely in an hour of melancholy, when

religion made its voice heard, that with her head in the skies she became conscious of the slough in which her feet were set. Then she cursed the blood in her veins; she cursed herself; she trembled to think that she should bear a daughter; and vowed, as these women vow, with the honor and resolution of the convict, that is to say, with the strongest resolution, the most scrupulous honor to be found under the sun; making her vow, therefore, before an altar, and consecrating it thereby, that her daughter should lead a virtuous and holy life, that of this long race of lost and sinful women there should come at last one angel who should appear for them in heaven. That vow made, the blood of the Marana regained its sway, and again the courtesan plunged into her life of adventure, with one more thought in her heart. At length she loved, with the violent love of the prostitute, as Henrietta Wilson loved Lord Ponsonby, as Mademoiselle Dupuis loved Bolingbroke, as the Marchesa di Pescara loved her husband; nay, she did not love, she adored a fair-haired half-feminine creature, investing him with all the virtues that she had not, and taking all his vices upon herself. Of this mad union with a weakling, a union blessed neither of God nor man, only to be excused by the happiness it brings, but never absolved by happiness; a union for which the most brazen front must one day blush, a daughter was born, a daughter to be saved, a daughter for whom La Marana desired a stainless life, and, above all things, the instincts of womanliness which she herself had not. Thenceforward, in poverty or prosperity, La Marana bore within her heart a pure affection, the fairest of all human sentiments, because it is the least selfish. Love has its own tinge of egoism, but there is no trace of it in a mother's affection.

And La Marana's motherhoood meant more to her than to other women. It was perhaps her hope of salvation, a plank to cling to in the shipwreck of her eternity. Was she not accomplishing part of her sacred task on earth by sending

one more angel to heaven? Was not this a better thing than a tardy repentance? Was there any other way now left to her of sending up prayers from a pure heart to God?

When her daughter was given to her, her Maria-Juana-Pepita (the little one should have had the whole calendar for patron saints if the mother could have had her will), then La Marana set before herself so high an ideal of the dignity of motherhood that she sought a truce from her life of sin. She would live virtuously and alone. There should be no more midnight revels nor wanton days. All her fortunes, all her happiness lay in the child's fragile cradle. The sound of the little voice made an oasis for her amid the burning sands of her life. How should this love be compared with any other? Were not all human affections blended in it with every hope of heaven?

La Marana determined that no stain should rest upon her daughter's life, save that of the original sin of her birth, which she strove to cleanse by a baptism in all social virtues; so she asked of the child's young father a sufficient fortune, and the name he bore. The child was no longer Juana Marana, but Juana dei Mancini.

At last, after seven years of joy and kisses, of rapture and bliss, the poor Marana must part with her darling, lest she also should be branded with her hereditary shame. The mother had force of soul sufficient to give up her child for her child's sake; and sought out, not without dreadful pangs, another mother for her, a family whose manners she might learn, where good examples would be set before her. A mother's abdication is an act either atrocious or sublime; in this case, was it not sublime?

At Taragona, therefore, a lucky accident brought the Lagounias in her way, and in a manner that brought out all the honorable integrity of the Spaniard and the nobleness of his wife. For these two, La Marana appeared like an angel that unlocks the doors of a prison. The merchant's fortune

and honor were in peril at the moment, and he needed prompt and secret help; La Marana handed over to him the sum of money intended for Juana's dowry, asking neither for gratitude nor for interest. According to her peculiar notions of jurisprudence, a contract was a matter of the heart, a stiletto the remedy in the hands of the weak, and God the supreme Court of Appeal.

She told Doña Lagounia the story of her miserable situation, and confided her child and her child's fortune to the honor of old Spain, and the untarnished integrity that pervaded the old house. Doña Lagounia had no children of her own, and was delighted to have an adopted daughter to bring up. The courtesan took leave of her darling, feeling that the child's future was secure, and that she had found a mother for Juana, a mother who would train her up to be a Mancini, and not a Marana.

Poor Marana, poor bereaved mother, she went away from the merchant's quiet and humble home, the abode of domestic and family virtue; and felt comforted in her grief as she pictured Juana growing up in that atmosphere of religion, piety, and honor, a maiden, a wife, and a mother, a happy mother, not for a few brief years, but all through a long lifetime. The tears that fell upon the threshold were tears that angels bear to heaven. Since that day of mourning and of hope La Marana had thrice returned to see her daughter, an irresistible presentiment each time bringing her back. The first time Juana had fallen dangerously ill.

"I knew it!" she said to Perez, as she entered his house.

Far away, and as she slept, she had dreamed that Juana was dying.

She watched over her daughter and tended her, and then one morning, when the danger was over, she kissed the sleeping girl's forehead, and went away without revealing herself. The mother within her bade the courtesan depart.

A second time La Marana came—this time to the church

where Juana dei Mancini made her first communion. The exiled mother, very plainly dressed, stood in the shadow behind a pillar, and saw her past self in her daughter, saw a divinely fair face like an angel's, pure as the newly-fallen snow on the heights of the hills. Even in La Marana's love for her child there was a trace of the courtesan; a feeling of jealousy stronger than all love that she had known awoke in her heart, and she left the church; she could no longer control a wild desire to stab Doña Lagounia, who stood there with that look of happiness upon her face, too really a mother to her child.

The last meeting between the two had taken place at Milan, whither the merchant and his wife had gone. La Marana, sweeping along the Corso in almost queenly state, flashed like lightning upon her daughter's sight, and was not recognized. Her anguish was terrible. This Marana on whom kisses were showered must hunger for one kiss in vain, one for which she would have given all the others, the girlish glad caress a daughter gives her mother, her honored mother, her mother in whom all womanly virtues shine. Juana as long as she lived was dead for her.

"What is it, love?" asked the Duc de Lina, and at the words a thought revived the courtesan's failing heart, a thought that gave her delicious happiness—Juana was safe henceforward! She might perhaps be one of the humblest of women, but not a shameless courtesan to whom any man might say, "What is it, love?"

Indeed, the merchant and his wife had done their duty with scrupulous fidelity. Juana's fortune in their hands had been doubled. Perez de Lagounia had become the richest merchant in the province, and in his feeling towards the young girl there was a trace of superstition. Her coming had saved the old house from ruin and dishonor, and had not the presence of this angel brought unlooked-for prosperity? His wife, a soul of gold, a refined and gentle nature, had brought

up her charge devoutly; the girl was as pure as she was beautiful. Juana was equally fitted to be the wife of a rich merchant or of a noble; she had every qualification for a brilliant destiny. But for the war that had broken out, Perez, who dreamed of living in Madrid, would ere now have given her in marriage to some Spanish grandee.

"I do not know where La Marana is at this moment," he concluded; "but wherever she may be, if she hears that our province is occupied by your armies, and that Taragona has been besieged, she is sure to be on her way hither to watch over her daughter."

This story wrought a change in the captain's intentions; he no longer thought of making a Marchesa di Montefiore of Juana dei Mancini. He recognized the Marana blood in that swift glance the girl had exchanged with him from her shelter behind the blind, in the stratagem by which she had satisfied her curiosity, in that last look she had given him; and the libertine meant to marry a virtuous wife.

This would be a dangerous escapade, no doubt, but the perils were of the kind that never sink the courage of the most pusillanimous, for love and its pleasures would reward them. There were obstacles everywhere; there was the apprentice who slept on the counter, and the servant-maid on the makeshift couch in the kitchen; Perez and his wife, who kept a dragon's watch by day, were old, and doubtless slept lightly; every sound echoed through the house, everything seemed to put the adventure beyond the range of possibilities. But as a set-off against these things, Montefiore had an ally—the blood of the Marana, which throbbed feverishly in the heart of the lovely Italian girl brought up as a Spaniard, the maiden athirst for love. Passion, the girl's nature, and Montefiore were a combination that might defy the whole world.

Prompted quite as strongly by the instincts of a chartered libertine as by the vague inexplicable hopes to which we give the name of presentiments, a word that describes them with

such startling aptness—Montefiore took up his stand at his window, and spent the early hours of the night there, looking down in the presumed direction of the secret hiding-place, where the old couple had enshrined their darling, the joy of their old age.

The warehouse on the *entresol* (to make use of a French word that will perhaps make the disposition of the house clearer to the reader) separated the two young people, so it was idle for the captain to try to convey a message by means of tapping upon the floor, a shift for speech that all lovers can devise under such circumstances. Chance, however, came to his assistance, or was it the young girl herself? Just as he took his stand at the window he saw a circle of light that fell upon the grim opposite wall of the yard, and in the midst of it a dark silhouette, the form of Juana. Everything that she did was shadowed there; from her attitude and the movement of her arms, she seemed to be arranging her hair for the night.

"Is she alone?" Montefiore asked himself. "If I weight a letter with a few coins, will it be safe to dangle it by a thread against the round window that no doubt lights her cell?"

He wrote a note forthwith, a note characteristic of the officer, of the soldier sent for reasons of family expediency to the isle of Elba, of the former dilettante Marquis, fallen from his high estate, and become a captain on the clothing establishment. He wrapped some coins in the note, devised a string out of various odds and ends, tied up the packet and let it down, without a sound, into the very centre of that round brightness.

"If her mother or the servant is with her," Montefiore thought, "I shall see the shadows on the wall; and if she is not alone, I will draw up the cord at once."

But when, after pains innumerable, which can readily be imagined, the weighted packet tapped at the glass, only one

shadow appeared, and it was the slender figure of Juana that flitted across the wall. Noiselessly the young girl opened the circular window, saw the packet, took it in, and stood for a while reading it.

Montefiore had written in his own name and entreated an interview. He offered, in the style of old romances, his heart and hand to Juana dei Mancini—a base and commonplace stratagem that nearly always succeeds! At Juana's age, is not nobility of soul an added danger? A poet of our own days has gracefully said that "only in her strength does woman yield." Let a lover, when he is most beloved, feign doubts of the love that he inspires, and in her pride and her trust in him, a girl would invent sacrifices for his sake, knowing neither the world nor man's nature well enough to retain her self-command when passion stirs within her, and to overwhelm with her scorn the lover who can accept a whole life offered to him to turn away a groundless reproach.

In our sublimely constituted society a young girl is placed in a painful dilemma between the forecasts of prudent virtue on the one hand, and the consequences of error upon the other. If she resists, it not seldom happens that she loses a lover and the first love, that is the most attractive of all; and if she is imprudent, she loses a marriage. Cast an eye over the vicissitudes of social life in Paris, and it is impossible to doubt the necessity of a religion that shall ensure that there are no more young girls seduced daily. And Paris is situated in the forty-eighth degree of latitude, while Taragona lies below the forty-first. The old question of climate is still useful to the novelist seeking an excuse for the suddenness of his catastrophe, and is made to explain the imprudence or the dilatoriness of a pair of lovers.

Montefiore's eyes were fixed meanwhile on the charming silhouette in the midst of the bright circle. Neither he nor Juana could see each other; an unlucky archway above her casement, with perverse malignity, cut off all chances of com-

munication by signs, such as two lovers can contrive by leaning out of their windows. So the captain concentrated his whole mind and attention upon the round patch on the wall. Perhaps all unwittingly the girl's movements might betray her thoughts. Here again he was foiled. Juana's strange proceedings gave Montefiore no room for the faintest hope; she was amusing herself by cutting up the billet.

It often happens that virtue and discretion, in distrust, adopt shifts familiar to the jealous Bartholos of comedy. Juana, having neither paper, pen, nor ink, was scratching an answer with the point of a pair of scissors. In another moment she tied the scrap of paper to the string, the officer drew it in, opened it, held it up against the lamp, and read the perforated characters—"Come," it said.

"'Come?'" said he to himself. "Poison, and carbine, and Perez' dagger! And how about the apprentice hardly asleep on the counter by this time, and the servant in her hammock, and the house booming like a bass viol with every sound? why, I can hear old Perez snoring away upstairs! 'Come!'——Then, has she nothing to lose?"

Acute reflection! Libertines alone can reason thus logically, and punish a woman for her devotion. The imagination of man has created Satan and Lovelace, but a maiden is an angelic being to whom he can lend nothing but his vices; so lofty, so fair is she, that he cannot set her higher nor add to her beauty; he has but the fatal power of blighting this creation by dragging it down to his miry level.

Montefiore waited till the drowsiest hour of the night, then in spite of his sober second thoughts, he crept downstairs. He had taken off his shoes, and carried his pistols with him, and now he groped his way step by step, stopping to listen in the silence; trying each separate stair, straining his eyes till he almost saw in the darkness, and ready to turn back at any moment if the least thing befell him. He wore his handsomest uniform; he had perfumed his dark hair, and taken

pains with the toilet that set off his natural good looks. On occasions like these, most men are as much a woman as any woman.

Montefiore managed to reach the door of the girl's secret hiding-place without difficulty. It was a little cabinet contrived in a corner which projected into another dwelling, a not unusual freak of the builder where ground-rents are high, and houses in consequence packed very tightly together. Here Juana lived alone, day and night, out of sight of all eyes. Hitherto she had slept near her adopted mother; but when Perez and his wife removed to the top of the house, the arrangements of the attics did not permit of their taking their ward thither also. So Doña Lagounia had left the girl to the guardianship of the lock of the secret door, to the protection of religious ideas, but so much the more powerful because they had become superstitions; and with the further safeguards of a natural pride, and the shrinking delicacy of the sensitive plant, which made Juana an exception among her sex, for to the most pathetic innocence Juana Mancini united no less the most passionate aspirations. It had needed a retired life and devout training to quiet and to cool the hot blood of the Maranas that glowed in her veins, the impulses that her adopted mother called temptations of the Evil one.

A faint gleam of light beneath the door in the panels discovered its whereabouts for Montefiore. He tapped softly with the tips of his finger-nails, and Juana let him in. Quivering from head to foot with excitement, he met the young girl's look of *naïve* curiosity, and read the most complete ignorance of her peril, and a sort of childlike admiration in her eyes. He stood, awed for a moment by the picture of the sanctuary before him.

The walls were hung with gray tapestry, covered with violet flowers. A small ebony chest, an antique mirror, a huge old-fashioned armchair, also made of ebony, and covered with tapestry; another chair beside the spindle-legged table,

a pretty carpet on the floor—that was all. But there were flowers on the table beside some embroidery work, and at the other end of the room stood the little narrow bed on which Juana dreamed; three pictures hung on the wall above it, and at the head stood a crucifix above a little holy water stoup, and a prayer framed and illuminated in gold. The room was full of the faint perfume of the flowers, of the soft light of the tapers; it all seemed so quiet, pure, and sacred. The subtle charm of Juana's dreamy fancies, nay of Juana herself, seemed to pervade everything; her soul was revealed by her surroundings; the pearl lay there in its shell.

Juana, clad in white, with no ornament save her own loveliness, letting fall her rosary to call on the name of Love, would have inspired even Montefiore with reverence if it had not been for the night about them and the silence, if Juana had welcomed love less eagerly, if the little white bed had not displayed the turned-down coverlet—the pillow, confidante of innumerable vague longings. Montefiore stood there for long, intoxicated by joy hitherto unknown; such joy as Satan, it may be, would know at a glimpse of paradise if the cloud-veil that envelops heaven was rent away for a moment.

"I loved you the first moment that I saw you," he said, speaking pure Tuscan in the tones of his musical Italian voice. "In you my soul and my life are set; if you so will it, they shall be yours forever."

To Juana listening, the air she breathed seemed to vibrate with the words grown magical upon her lover's tongue.

"Poor little girl! how have you breathed the atmosphere of this gloomy place so long, and lived? You,meant to reign like a queen in the world, to dwell in the palace of a prince, to pass from festival to festival, to feel in your own heart the joys that you create, to see the world at your feet, to make the fairest splendors pale before the glorious beauty that shall never be rivaled—*you* have lived here in seclusion with this old tradesman and his wife!"

There was a purpose in his exclamation; he wanted to find out whether or no Juana had ever had a lover.

"Yes," she answered. "But who can have told you my inmost thoughts? For these twelve months past I have been weary to death of it. Yes, I would die rather than stay any longer in this house. Do you see this embroidery? I have set countless dreadful thoughts into every stitch of it. How often I have longed to run away and fling myself into the sea! Do you ask why? I have forgotten already——Childish troubles, but very keenly felt in spite of their childishness—— Often at night when I kissed my mother, I have given her such a kiss as one gives for a last farewell, saying in my heart, I will kill myself to-morrow. After all, I did not die. Suicides go to hell, and I was so much afraid of that, that I made up my mind to endure my life, to get up and go to bed, and do the same things hour after hour of every day. My life was not irksome, it was painful. And yet, my father and mother worship me. Oh! I am wicked! indeed, I tell my confessor so."

"Then have you always lived here without amusements, without pleasures?"

"Oh! I have not always felt like this. Until I was fifteen years old, I enjoyed seeing the festivals of the Church; I loved the singing and the music. I was so happy, because I felt that, like the angels, I was sinless, so glad that I might take the sacrament every week; in short, I loved God then. But in these three years I have changed utterly, day by day. It began when I wanted flowers here in the house, and they gave me very beautiful ones; then I wanted—— But now I want nothing any longer," she added, after a pause, and she smiled at Montefiore.

"Did you not tell me just now in your letter that you would love me for ever?"

"Yes, my Juana," murmured Montefiore. He put his arm round the waist of this adorable girl and pressed her

closely to his heart. "Yes. But let me speak to you as you pray to God. Are you not fairer than Our Lady in heaven? Hear me," and he set a kiss in her hair, "for me that forehead of yours is the fairest altar on earth; I swear to worship you, my idol, to pour out all the wealth of the world upon you. My carriages are yours, my palace in Milan is yours, yours all the jewels and the diamonds, the heirlooms of my ancient house; new ornaments and dresses every day, and all the countless pleasures and delights of the world."

"Yes," she said, "I should like it all very much; but in my soul I feel that I should love my dear husband more than all things else in the world."

Mio caro sposo! Italian was Juana's native speech, and it is impossible to put into two words of another language the wonderful tenderness, the winning grace with which that brief delicious phrase is invested by the accents of an Italian tongue. "I shall find," she said, and the purity of a seraph shone in her eyes, "I shall find my beloved religion again in *him*. His and God's, God's and his!—— But you are he, are you not?" she cried, after a pause. "Surely, surely you are he! Ah! come and see the picture that my father brought me from Italy."

She took up a candle, beckoned to Montefiore, and showed him a picture that hung at the foot of the bed—Saint Michael trampling Satan under foot.

"Look!" she cried, "has he not your eyes? That made me think, as soon as I saw you in the street, that in the meeting I saw the finger of heaven. So often I have lain awake in the morning before my mother came to call me to prayer, thinking about that picture, looking at the angel, until at last I came to think that he was my husband. *Mon Dieu!* I am talking as I think to myself. What wild nonsense it must seem to you! but if you only knew how a poor recluse longs to pour out the thoughts that oppress her! I used to talk to these flowers and the woven garlands on the tapestry when I

was alone; they understood me better, I think, than my father and mother—always so serious——"

"Juana," said Montefiore, as he took her hands and kissed them, passion shone in his eyes and overflowed in his gestures and in the sound of his voice, "talk to me as if I were your husband, talk to me as you talk to yourself. I have suffered all that you have suffered. Few words will be needed, when we talk together, to bring back the whole past of either life before we met; but there are not words enough in language to tell of the bliss that lies before us. Lay your hand on my heart. Do you feel how it beats? Let us vow, before God, who sees and hears us, to be faithful to each other all our lives. Stay, take this ring. Give me yours."

"Give away my ring?" she cried, startled.

"Why not?" asked Montefiore, dismayed by so much simplicity.

"Why, it came to me from our Holy Father the Pope. When I was a little girl a beautiful lady set it on my finger; she took care of me, and brought me here, and she told me to keep it always."

"Then you do not love me, Juana?"

"Ah! here it is," she cried. "Are you not more myself than I?"

She held out the ring, trembling as she did so, keeping her fingers tightly clasped upon it as she looked at Montefiore with clear, questioning eyes. That ring meant her whole self: she gave it to him.

"Oh! my Juana!" said Montefiore as he held her closely in his arms, "only a monster could be false to you. I will love you for ever."

Juana grew dreamy. Montefiore, thinking within himself that in his first interview, he must not run the slightest risk of startling a girl so innocent, whose imprudence sprang rather from virtue than from desire, was fain to content himself with thinking of the future of her beauty now that he had known

its power, and of the innocent marriage of the ring, that most sublime of betrothals, the simplest and most binding of all ceremonies, the betrothal of the heart.

For the rest of the night, and all day long on the morrow Juana's imagination would surely become the accomplice of his desires. So he put constraint upon himself, and tried to be as respectful as he was tender. With these thoughts present in his mind, prompted by his passion, and yet more by the desires that Juana inspired in him, his words were insinuating and fervent. He led the innocent child to plan out the new life before them, painted the world for her in the most glowing colors, dwelt on the household details that possess such a delightful interest for young girls, and made with her the compacts over which lovers dispute, the agreements that give rights and reality to love. Then, when they had decided the hour for their nightly tryst, he went, leaving a happy but a changed Juana. The simple and innocent Juana no longer existed, already there was more passion than a girl should reveal in the last glance that she gave him, in the charming way that she held up her forehead for the touch of her lover's lips. It was all the result of solitude and irksome tasks upon this nature; if she was to be prudent and virtuous, the knowledge of the world should either have come to her gradually or have been hidden from her for ever.

"How slowly the day will go to-morrow!" she said, as another kiss, still respectfully given, was pressed upon her forehead.

"But you will sit in the dining-room, will you not? and raise your voice a little when you talk, so that I may hear you, and the sound may fill my heart."

Montefiore, beginning to understand the life that Juana led, was but the better pleased that he had managed to restrain his desires that he might the better secure his end. He returned to his room without mishap.

Ten days went by, and nothing occurred to disturb the

peace and quiet of the house. Montefiore, with the persuasive manners of an Italian, had gained the good graces of old Perez and Doña Lagounia; indeed, he was popular with the whole household—with the apprentice and the maidservant; but in spite of the confidence that he had succeeded in inspiring in them, he never attempted to take advantage of it to ask to see Juana, or to open the door of that little sealed paradise. The Italian girl, in her longing to see her lover, had often besought him to do this, but from motives of prudence he had always refused. On the contrary, he had used the character he had gained and all his skill to lull the suspicions of the old couple; he had accustomed them to his habit of never rising till mid-day, soldier as he was. The captain gave out that his health was bad. So the two lovers only lived at night when all the household was asleep.

If Montefiore had not been a libertine to whom a long experience of pleasure had given presence of mind under all conditions, they would have been lost half a score of times in those ten days. A young lover, with the single-heartedness of first love, would have been tempted in his rapture into imprudences that were very hard to resist; but the Italian was proof even against Juana, against her pouting lips, her wild spirits, against a Juana who wound the long plaits of her hair about his throat to keep him by her side. The keenest observer would have been sorely puzzled to detect those midnight meetings. It may well be believed that the Italian, sure of his ultimate success, enjoyed prolonging the ineffable pleasure of this intrigue in which he made progress step by step, in fanning the flame that gradually waxed hotter, till everything must yield to it at last.

On the eleventh day, as they sat at dinner, he deemed it expedient to confide to Perez (under the seal of secrecy) the history of the disgrace into which he had fallen among his family. It was a mésalliance, he said.

There was something revolting in this lie, told as a confi-

dence, while that midnight drama was in progress beneath the old man's roof. Montefiore, an experienced actor, was leading up to a catastrophe planned by himself; and, like an artist who loves his art, he enjoyed the thought of it. He meant very shortly to take leave of the house and of his lady-love without regret. And when Juana, risking her life it might be to ask the question, should inquire of Perez what had become of their guest, Perez would tell her, all unwittingly, that "the Marchese di Montefiore has been reconciled with his family; they have consented to receive his wife, and he has taken her to them."

And Juana?—— The Italian never inquired of himself what would become of her; he had had ample opportunity of knowing her nobleness, her innocence, and her goodness, and felt sure that Juana would keep silence.

He obtained a message to carry for some general or other. Three days afterwards, on the night before he must start, Montefiore went straight to Juana's room instead of going first to his own. The same instinct that bids the tiger leave no morsel of his prey prompted the Italian to lengthen the night of farewells. Juana, the true daughter of two southern lands, with the passion of Spain and of Italy in her heart, was enraptured by the boldness that brought her lover to her and revealed the ardor of his love. To know the delicious torment of an illicit passion under the sanction of marriage, to conceal her husband behind the bed-curtains, half deceiving the adopted father and mother, to whom she could say in case of discovery, "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore," was not this a festival for the young and romantic girl who, for three years past, had dreamed of love—love always beset with perils? The curtains of the door fell, drawing about their madness and happiness a veil which it is useless to raise.

It was nearly nine o'clock, the merchant and his wife were reading the evening prayer, when suddenly the sound of a carriage, drawn by several horses, came from the narrow street

without. Some one knocked hastily and loudly at the door of the shop. The servant ran to open it, and in a moment a woman sprang into the quaint old room—a woman magnificently dressed, though her traveling carriage was besplashed by the mire of many roads, for she had crossed Italy and France and Spain. It was La Marana! La Marana, in spite of her thirty-six years and her riotous life, in the full pride of her *beltà folgorante*, to record the superb epithet invented for her in Milan by her enraptured adorers. La Marana, the openly avowed mistress of a king, had left Naples and its festivals and sunny skies, at the very height and summit of her strange career—had left gold and madrigals and silks and perfumes, and her royal lover, when she learned from him what was passing in Spain, and how that Taragona was besieged.

"Taragona!" she cried, "and before the city is taken! I must be in Taragona in ten days!" And without another thought for courts or crowned heads, she had reached Taragona, provided with a passport that gave her something like the powers of an empress, and with gold that enabled her to cross the French empire with the speed and splendor of a rocket. There is no such thing as distance for a mother; she who is a mother, indeed, sees her child, and knows by instinct how it fares though they are as far apart as the poles.

"My daughter! my daughter!" cried La Marana.

At that cry, at this swift invasion of their house, and apparition of a queen traveling *incognito*, Perez and his wife let the prayer-book fall; that voice rang in their ears like a thunder-clap, and La Marana's eyes flashed lightnings.

"She is in there," the merchant answered quietly, after a brief pause, during which they recovered from the shock of surprise caused by La Marana's sudden appearance, and by her look and tone. "She is in there," he said again, indicating the little hiding-place.

"Yes, but has she not been ill? Is she quite——"

"Perfectly well," said Doña Lagounia.

"Oh, God!" cried La Marana, "plunge me now in hell for all eternity, if it be Thy pleasure," and she sank down utterly exhausted into a chair.

The flush that anxiety had brought to her face faded suddenly; her cheeks grew white; she who had borne up bravely under the strain, had no strength left when it was over. The joy was too intolerable, a joy more intense than her previous distress, for she was still vibrating with dread, when bliss keen as anguish came upon her.

"But how have you done!" she asked. "Taragona was taken by assault."

"Yes," answered Perez. "But when you saw that I was alive, how could you ask such a question? How should any one reach Juana but over my dead body?"

The courtesan grasped Perez' horny hand on receiving this answer; tears gathered in her eyes and fell upon his fingers as she kissed them—the costliest of all things under the sun for her, who never wept.

"Brave Perez!" she said at last; "but surely there are soldiers billeted upon you, are there not?"

"Only one," answered the Spaniard. "Luckily, we have one of the most honorable of men, an Italian by nationality, a Spaniard by birth, a hater of Bonaparte, a married man, a steady character. He rises late, and goes to bed early. He is in bad health, too, just now."

"An Italian! What is his name?"

"Captain Montefiore, he——"

"Why, he is not the Marchese di Montefiore, is he?"

"Yes, señora, the very same."

"Has he seen Juana?"

"No," said Doña Lagounia.

"You are mistaken, wife," said Perez. "The Marquis must have seen Juana once, only for a moment, it is true, but I think he must have seen her that day when she came in at supper-time."

"Ah! I should like to see my daughter."

"Nothing is easier," said Perez. "She is asleep. Though if she has left the key in the lock, we shall have to wake her."

As the merchant rose to take down the duplicate key from its place, he happened to glance up through the tall window. The light from the large round pane-opening of Juana's cell fell upon the dark wall on the opposite side of the yard, tracing a gleaming circle there, and in the midst of the lighted space he saw two shadowy figures such as no sculptor till the time of the gifted Canova could have dreamed of. The Spaniard turned to the room again.

"I do not know," he said to La Marana, "where we have put the key——"

"You look very pale!" she exclaimed.

"I will soon tell you why," he answered, as he sprang towards his dagger, caught it up, and beat violently on the door in the paneling. "Open the door!" he shouted. "Juana! open the door!"

There was an appalling despair in his tones that struck terror into the two women who heard him.

Juana did not open, because there was some delay in hiding Montefiore. She knew nothing of what had passed in the room without. The tapestry hangings on either side of the door deadened all sounds.

"Madame," said Perez, turning to La Marana, "I told you just now that I did not know where the key was. That was a lie. Here it is," and he took it from the sideboard, "but it is useless. Juana's key is in the lock, and her door is barricaded. We are deceived, wife! There is a man in Juana's room."

"By my hopes of salvation, the thing is impossible!" said Doña Lagounia.

"Do not perjure yourself, Doña Lagounia. Our honor is slain; and *she*" (he turned to La Marana, who had risen to her

feet, and stood motionless as if thunderstruck by his words), "she may well scorn us. She saved our lives, our fortune, and our honor, and we have barely guarded her money for her—Juana, open the door!" he shouted, "or I will break it down!"

The whole house rang with the cry; his voice grew louder and angrier; but he was cool and self-possessed. He held Montefiore's life in his hands, in another moment he would wash away his remorse in every drop of the Italian's blood.

"Go out! go out! go out! all of you!" cried La Marana, and springing for the dagger like a tigress, she snatched it from the hand of the astonished Perez. "Go out of this room, Perez," she went on, speaking quite quietly now. "Go out, you and your wife, and the maid and the apprentice. There will be a murder here directly, and you might all be shot down by the French for it. Do not you mix yourself up in it, it is my affair entirely. When my daughter and I meet, God alone should be present. As for the man, he is mine. The whole world should not snatch him out of my hands. There, there, go! I forgive you. I see it all. The girl is a Marana. My blood flows in her veins, and you, your religion, and your honor have been powerless against it."

Her groan was dreadful to hear. She turned dry eyes upon them. She had lost everything, but she was accustomed to suffering; she was a courtesan. The door opened. La Marana henceforth heeded nothing else, and Perez, making a sign to his wife, could remain at his post. The old Spaniard, implacable where honor was concerned, determined to assist the wronged mother's vengeance. Juana, in her white draperies, stood quietly there in her room in the soft lamplight. "What do you want with me?" she asked.

In spite of herself, a light shudder ran through La Marana.

"Perez," she asked, "is there any other way out of this closet?"

Perez shook his head; and on that the courtesan went into the room.

"Juana," she said, "I am your mother, your judge—you have put yourself in the one situation in which I can reveal myself to you. You have come to my level, you whom I had thought to raise to heaven. Oh! you have fallen very low!—— You have a lover in your room."

"Madame, no one but my husband should or could be there," she answered. "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore."

"Then are there two of them?" asked old Perez sternly. "He told me that he was married."

"Montefiore! my love!" cried the girl, rending the curtains, and discovering the officer; "come forward, these people are slandering you."

The Italian's face was haggard and pale; he saw the dagger in La Marana's hand, and he knew La Marana. At one bound he sprang out of the chamber, and with a voice of thunder shouted, "Help! help! murder! they are killing a Frenchman! Soldiers of the Sixth of the line, run for Captain Diard!—— Help!"

Perez had secured the Marquis, and was about to gag him by putting his large hand over the soldier's mouth, when the courtesan stopped him.

"Hold him fast," she said, "but let him call. Throw open the doors, and leave them open; and now go out, all of you, I tell you! As for you," she continued, addressing Montefiore, "shout, and call for help—— As soon as there is a sound of your men's footsteps, this blade will be in your heart—— Are you married? Answer me."

Montefiore, lying across the threshold of the door, two paces from Juana, heard nothing, and saw nothing, for the blinding gleam of the dagger blade.

"Then he meant to deceive me;" the words came slowly from Juana. "He told me that he was free."

"He told me that he was a married man," said Perez, in the same stern tones as before.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Doña Lagounia. La Marana

stooped to mutter in the ear of the Marquis, "Answer me, will you, soul of mud?"

"Your daughter——" Montefiore began.

"The daughter I once had is dead, or she soon will be," said La Marana. "I have no daughter now. Do not use that word again. Answer me, are you married?"

"No, madame," Montefiore said at last (he wished to gain time); "I mean to marry your daughter."

"My noble Montefiore!" cried Juana, with a deep breath.

"Then what made you fly and call for help!" demanded Perez.

Terrible perspicacity!

Juana said nothing, but she wrung her hands, went over to her armchair, and sat down. Even at that moment there was an uproar in the street, and in the deep silence that fell upon the parlor it was sufficiently easy to catch the sounds. A private soldier of the Sixth, who had chanced to pass along the street when Montefiore cried out for help, had gone to call up Diard. Luckily, the quartermaster was in his lodging, and came at once with several comrades.

"Why did I fly?" repeated Montefiore, who heard the sound of his friend's voice. "Because I had told you the truth. Diard! Diard!" he shrieked aloud.

But at a word from Perez, who meant that all in his house should share in the murder, the apprentice made the door fast, and the men were obliged to force it open. La Marana, therefore, could stab the guilty creature at her feet before they made an entrance; but her hand shook with pent-up wrath, and the blade slipped aside upon Montefiore's epaulette. Yet so heavy had been the blow, that the Italian rolled over almost at Juana's feet. The girl did not see him, but La Marana sprang upon her prey, and, lest she should fail this time, she held his throat in an iron grasp, and pointed the dagger at his heart.

"I am free!" he gasped. "I will marry her! I swear it

by God! by my mother! by all that is most sacred in this world. I am not married! I will marry her! Upon my word of honor, I will!" and he set his teeth in the courtesan's arm.

"That is enough, mother." said Juana; "kill him! I would not have such a coward for my husband if he were ten times more beautiful."

"Ah! that is my daughter!" cried La Marana.

"What is going on here?" asked the quartermaster, looking about him.

"This," shouted Montefiore; "they are murdering me on that girl's account; she says that I am her lover; she trapped me, and now they want to force me to marry her against my will——"

"Against your will?" cried Diard, struck with the sublime beauty that indignation, scorn, and hate had lent to Juana's face, already so fair. "You are very hard to please! If she must have a husband, here am I. Put up your dagger."

La Marana grasped the Italian, pulled him to his feet, brought him to the bedside, and said in his ear—

"If I spare your life, you may thank that last speech of yours for it. But keep it in mind. If you say a word against my daughter, we shall see each other again. What will her dowry amount to?" she asked of Perez.

"Two hundred thousand piastres down——"

"That will not be all, monsieur," said the courtesan, addressing Diard. "Who are you? You can go," she added, turning to Montefiore.

But when the Marquis heard mention of two hundred thousand piastres down, he came forward, saying, "I am really quite free——"

"You are really quite free to go," said La Marana, and the Italian went.

"Alas! monsieur," the girl spoke, addressing Diard; "I thank you, and I admire you. But my bridegroom is in

heaven; I shall be the bride of Christ. To-morrow I shall enter the convent of——"

"Oh, hush! hush! Juana, my Juana!" cried her mother, holding the girl tightly in her arms. Then she whispered, "You must take another bridegroom."

Juana turned pale.

"Who are you, monsieur?" asked the mother of the Provençal.

"I am nothing as yet but a quartermaster in the Sixth Regiment of the line," said he; "but for such a wife, a man would feel that it lay in him to be a marshal of France some day. My name is Pierre-François Diard. My father was a guild magistrate, so I am not a——"

"Eh! you are an honest man, are you not?" cried La Marana. "If the Signorina Juana dei Mancini cares for you, you may both be happy. Juana," she went on gravely, "when you are the wife of a good and worthy man, remember that you will be a mother. I have sworn that you shall set a kiss upon your child's forehead without a blush—— (Here her tone changed somewhat.) I have sworn that you shall be a virtuous wife. So in this life, though many troubles await you, whatever happens to you, be a chaste and faithful wife to your husband; sacrifice everything to him; he will be the father of your children—— A father to your children!—— Stay, between you and a lover your mother always will stand; I shall be your mother only when danger threatens—— Do you see Perez's dagger? *That* is part of your dower," and she flung the weapon down on the bed. "There I leave it as a guarantee of your honor, so long as I have eyes to see and hands that can strike a blow. Farewell," she said, keeping back the tears; "may heaven direct that we never meet again," and at that her tears flowed fast.

"Poor child! you have been very happy in this little cell, happier than you know. Act in such a way that she may

never look back on it with regret," La Marana added, looking at her future son-in-law.

The story, which has been given simply by way of introduction, is not by any means the subject of the following study; it has been told to explain, in the first place, how Montefiore and Diard became acquainted, how Captain Diard came to marry Juana dei Mancini, and to make known what passions filled Mme. Diard's heart, what blood flowed in her veins.

By the time that the quartermaster had been through the slow and tedious formalities indispensable for a French soldier who is obtaining leave to marry, he had fallen passionately in love with Juana dei Mancini, and Juana dei Mancini had had time to reflect on her fate. An appalling fate! Juana, who neither loved nor esteemed this Diard, was none the less bound to him by a promise, a rash promise no doubt, but there had been no help for it. The Provençal was neither handsome nor well made. His manners were totally lacking in distinction, and savored of the camp, of his provincial bringing up and imperfect education. How should the young girl love Diard? With her perfect elegance and grace, her unconquerable instinct for luxury and refinement, her natural inclinations were towards the higher spheres of society; and she could not bring herself to feel so much as esteem for this Diard who was to marry her, and precisely for that very reason.

The repugnance was very natural. Woman is a sacred and gracious being, almost always misunderstood; the judgments passed upon her are almost always unjust, because she is not understood. If Juana had loved Diard, she would have esteemed him. Love creates a new self within a woman; the old self passes away with the dawn of love, and in the wedding-robe of a passion that shall last as long as life itself, her life is invested with whiteness and purity. After this new birth, this revival of modesty and virtue, she has no longer

a past; it is utterly forgotten; she turns wholly to the future that she may learn all things afresh. In this sense, the words of the famous line that a modern poet has put into the mouth of Marion Delorme, a line, moreover, that Corneille might well have written, are steeped in truth—

"And Love gives back my maidenhood to me."

Does it not read like a reminiscence of some tragedy of Corneille's? The style of the father of French drama, so forceful, owing so little to epithet, seems to be revived again in the words. And yet the writer, the poet of our own day, has been compelled to sacrifice it to the taste of a public only capable of appreciating vaudevilles.

So Juana, loveless, was still the same Juana, betrayed, humiliated, brought very low. How should this Juana respect a man who could take her thus? With the high-minded purity of youth, she felt the force of a distinction, subtle in appearance, but real and immutable, a binding law upon the heart, which even the least thoughtful women instinctively apply to all their sentiments. Life had opened out before Juana, and the prospect saddened her inmost soul.

Often she looked at Perez and Doña Lagounia, her eyes full of the tears she was too proud to let fall; they understood the bitter thoughts contained in those tears, but they said no word. Were not reproaches useless? And why should they seek to comfort her? The keener the sympathy, the wider the pent-up sorrow would spread.

One evening, as Juana sat in her little cell in a dull stupor of wretchedness, she heard the husband and wife talking together. They thought that the door was shut, and a wail broke from her adopted mother.

"The poor child will die of grief!"

"Yes," answered Perez in a faltering voice; "but what can we do? Can I go now to boast of my ward's chaste beauty to the Comte d'Arcos, to whom I hoped to marry her?"

"There is a difference between one slip and vice," said the old woman, indulgent as an angel could have been.

"Her mother gave her to him," objected Perez.

"All in a minute, and without consulting her!" cried Doña Lagounia.

"She knew quite well what she was doing——"

"Into what hands our pearl will pass!"

"Not a word more, or I will go and pick a quarrel with that —— Diard!"

"And then there would be one more misfortune," exclaimed Doña Lagounia.

Juana, listening to these terrible words, knew at last the value of the happy life that had flowed on untroubled until her error ended it. So the innocent hours in her peaceful retreat were to have been crowned by a brilliant and splendid existence; the delights so often dreamed of would have been hers. Those dreams had caused her ruin. She had fallen from the heights of social greatness to the feet of *Monsieur* Diard! Juana wept; her thoughts almost drove her mad. For several seconds she hesitated between a life of vice and religion. Vice offered a prompt solution; religion, a life made up of suffering. The inward debate was stormy and solemn. To-morrow was the fatal day, the day fixed for this marriage. It was not too late; Juana might be Juana still. If she remained free, she knew the utmost extent of her calamities; but when married, she could not tell what might lie in store for her. Religion gained the day. Doña Lagounia came to watch and pray by her daughter's side, as she might have done by a dying woman's bed.

"It is the will of God," she said to Juana. Nature gives to a woman a power peculiarly her own, that enables her to endure suffering, a power succeeded in turn by weakness that counsels resignation. Juana submitted without an afterthought. She determined to fulfill her mother's vow, to cross the desert of life, and so reach heaven, knowing that no

flowers could spring up in the thorny paths that lay before her. She married Diard.

As for the quartermaster, though Juana judged him pitilessly, who else would not have forgiven him? He was intoxicated with love. La Marana, with the quick instinct natural to her, had felt passion in the tones of his voice, and seen in him the abrupt temper, the impulsive generosity of the south. In the paroxysm of her great anger she had seen Diard's good qualities, and these only, and thought that these were sufficient guarantees for her daughter's happiness.

And to all appearance the early days of this marriage were happy. But to lay bare the underlying facts of the case, the miserable secrets that women bury in the depths of their souls, Juana had determined that she would not overcloud her husband's joy. All women who are victims of an ill-assorted marriage come sooner or later to play a double part—a part terrible to play, and Juana had already taken up her rôle. Of such a life, a man can only record the facts; and women's hearts alone can divine the inner life of sentiments. Is it not a story impossible to relate in all its truth? Juana, struggling every hour against her own nature, half-Spanish, half-Italian; Juana, shedding tears in secret till she had no tears left to shed, was a typical creation, a living symbol, destined to represent the uttermost extent of woman's misfortunes. The minute detail required to depict that life of restless pain would be without interest for those who crave melodramatic sensation. And would not an analysis, in which every wife would discover some of her own experience, require an entire volume if it were to be given in full? Such a book, by its very nature, would be impossible to write, for its merits must consist in half-tones and in subtle shades of color that critics would consider vague and indistinct. And besides, who that does not bear another heart within his heart can touch on the pathetic, deeply-hidden tragedies that some women take with them to their graves; the heartache, understood of none—not even

of those who cause it; the sighs in vain; the devotion that, here on earth at least, meets with no return; unappreciated magnanimities of silence and scorn of vengeance; unfailing generosity, lavished in vain; longings for happiness destined to be unfulfilled; angelic charity that blesses in secret; all the beliefs held sacred, all the inextinguishable love? This life Juana knew; fate spared her in nothing. Hers was to be in all things the lot of a wronged and unhappy wife, always forgiving her wrongs; a woman pure as a flawless diamond, though through her beauty, as flawless and as dazzling as the diamond, a way of revenge lay open to her. Of a truth, she need not dread the dagger in her dower.

But at first, under the influence of love, of a passion that for a while at least can work a change in the most depraved nature, and bring to light all that is noblest in a human soul, Diard behaved like a man of honor. He compelled Montefiore to go out of the regiment, and even out of that division of the army, that his wife might not be compelled to meet the Marquis during the short time that she was to remain in Spain. Then the quartermaster asked to change his regiment, and managed to exchange into the Imperial Guard. He meant at all costs to gain a title; he would have honors and a great position to match his great fortune. With this thought in his mind, he displayed great courage in one of our bloodiest battles in Germany, and was so badly wounded that he could no longer stay in the service. For a time it was feared that he might have to lose his leg, and he was forced to retire, with his pension indeed, but without the title of baron or any of the rewards which he had hoped for, and very likely would have won, if his name had not been Diard.

These events, together with his wound and his disappointed hopes, made a changed man of the late quartermaster. The Provençal's energy, wrought for a time to a fever pitch, suddenly deserted him. At first, however, his wife sustained his courage; his efforts, his bravery, and his ambition had given

her some belief in her husband; and surely it behooved her, of all women, to play a woman's part, to be a tender consoler for the troubles of life.

Juana's words put fresh heart into the major. He went to live in Paris, determined to make a high position for himself in the administration; the quartermaster of the Sixth Line Regiment should be forgotten, and some day Madame Diard should wear a splendid title. His passion for his charming wife had made him quick to guess her inmost wishes. Juana did not speak of them, but he understood her; he was not loved as a man dreams of being loved—he knew it, and longed to be looked up to and loved and caressed. The luckless man anticipated happiness with a wife who was at all times so submissive and so gentle; but her gentleness and her submission meant nothing but that resignation to her fate which had given Juana to him. Resignation and religion, were these love? Diard could often have wished for a refusal instead of that wifely obedience; often he would have given his soul if Juana would but have deigned to weep upon his breast, and ceased to conceal her feelings with the smile that she wore proudly as a mask upon her face.

Many a man in his youth (for after a certain time we give up struggling) strives to triumph over an evil destiny that brings the thunder-clouds from time to time above the horizon of his life; and when he falls into the depths of misfortune, those unrequited struggles should be taken into account. Like many another, Diard tried all ways, and found all ways barred against him. His wealth enabled him to surround his wife with all the luxuries that can be enjoyed in Paris. She had a great mansion and vast drawing-rooms, and presided over one of those houses frequented by some few artists who are uncritical by nature, by a great many schemers, by the frivolous folk who are ready to go anywhere to be amused, and by certain men of fashion, attracted by Juana's beauty. Those who make themselves conspicuous in Paris must either

conquer Paris or fall victims. Diard's character was not strong enough, nor compact enough, nor persistent enough to impress itself upon the society of a time when every one else was likewise bent upon reaching a high position. Ready-made social classifications are not improbably a great blessing, even for the people. Napoleon's "Memoirs" have informed us of the pains he was at to impose social conventions upon a court composed for the most part of subjects who had once been his equals. But Napoleon was a Corsican, Diard was a Provençal.

If the two men had been mentally equal—an islander is always a more complete human being than a man born and bred on the mainland; and though Provence and Corsica lie between the same degrees of latitude, the narrow stretch of sea that keeps them apart is, in spite of man's inventions, a whole ocean that makes two different countries of them both.

From this false position, which Diard falsified yet further, grave misfortunes arose. Perhaps there is a useful lesson to be learned by tracing the chain of interdependent facts that imperceptibly brought about the catastrophe of the story.

In the first place, Parisian scoffers could not see the pictures that adorned the late quartermaster's mansion without a significant smile. The recently purchased masterpieces were all condemned by the unspoken slur cast upon the pictures that had been the spoils of war in Spain; by this slur, self-love avenged itself for the involuntary offense of Diard's wealth. Juana understood the meaning of some of the ambiguous compliments in which the French excel. Acting upon her advice, therefore, her husband sent the Spanish pictures back to Taragona. But the world of Paris, determined to put the worst construction on the matter, said, "That fellow Diard is shrewd; he has sold his pictures," and the good folk continued to believe that the paintings which still hung on the walls had not been honestly come by. Then some ill-natured women inquired how a Diard had come to marry a young wife

so rich and so beautiful. Comments followed, endless absurdities were retailed, after the manner of Paris. If Juana rose above it all, even above the scandal, and met with nothing but the respect due to her pure and devout life, that respect ended with her, and was not accorded to her husband. Her shining eyes glanced over her rooms, and her woman's clear-sightedness brought her nothing but pain. And yet—the disparagement was quite explicable. Military men, for all the virtues with which romance endows them, could not forgive the quondam quartermaster for his wealth and his determination to cut a figure in Paris, and for that very reason.

There is a world in Paris that lies between the farthest house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain on the one hand, and the last mansion in the Rue Saint-Lazare on the other; between the rising ground of the Luxembourg and the heights of Montmartre; a world that dresses and gossips, dresses to go out, and goes out to gossip; a world of petty and great airs; a world of mean and poor ambitions, masquerading in insolence; a world of envy and of fawning arts. It is made up of gilded rank, and rank that has lost its gilding, of young and old, of nobility of the fourth century and titles of yesterday, of those who laugh at the expense of a *parvenu*, and others who fear to be contaminated by him, of men eager for the downfall of a power, though none the less they will bow the knee to it if it holds its own; and all these ears hear, and all these tongues repeat, and all these minds are informed in the course of an evening of the birthplace, education, and previous history of each new aspirant for its high-places. If there is no High Court of Justice in this exalted sphere, it boasts the most ruthless of procurors-general, an intangible public opinion that dooms the victim and carries out the sentence, that accuses and brands the delinquent. Do not hope to hide anything from this tribunal, tell everything at once yourself, for it is determined to go to the bottom of everything, and knows everything. Do not seek to understand the

mysterious operation by which intelligence is flashed from place to place, so that a story, a scandal, or a piece of news is known everywhere simultaneously in the twinkling of an eye. Do not ask who set the machinery in motion ; it is a social mystery, no observer can do more than watch its phenomena, and its working is rapid beyond belief. A single example shall suffice. The murder of the Duc de Berri, at the opera, was known in the farthest part of the Ile Saint-Louis ten minutes after the crime was committed. The opinion of the Sixth Regiment of the line concerning Diard permeated this world of Paris on the very evening of his first ball.

So Diard himself could accomplish nothing. Henceforward his wife, and his wife alone, might make a way for him. Strange portent of a strange civilization ! If a man can do nothing by himself in Paris, he has still some chance of rising in the world if his wife is young and clever. There are women, weak to all appearance, invalids who, without rising from their sofas or leaving their rooms, make their influence felt in society, and, by bringing countless secret springs into play, gain for their husbands the position which their own vanity desires. But Juana, whose girlhood had been spent in the quaint simplicity of the narrow house in Taragona, knew nothing of the corruption, the baseness, or the opportunities afforded by life in Paris ; she looked out upon it with girlish curiosity, and learned from it no worldly wisdom save the lessons taught her by her wounded pride and susceptibilities. Juana, moreover, possessed the quick instinct of a maiden heart, and was as swift to anticipate an impression as a sensitive plant. The lonely girl had become a woman all at once. She saw that if she endeavored to compel society to honor her husband, it must be after the Spanish fashion, of telling a lie, carbine in hand. Did not her own constant watchfulness tell her how necessary her manifold precautions were? A gulf yawned for Diard between the failure to make himself respected and the opposite danger of being respected but too

much. Then as suddenly as before, when she had foreseen her life, there came a revelation of the world to her; she beheld on all sides the vast extent of an irreparable misfortune. Then came the tardy recognition of her husband's peculiar weaknesses, his total unfitness to play the parts he had assigned to himself, the incoherency of his ideas, the mental incapacity to grasp this society as a whole, or to comprehend the subtleties that are all-important there. Would not tact effect more for a man in his position than force of character? But the tact that never fails is perhaps the greatest of all forces.

So far from effacing the blot upon the Diard scutcheon, the major was at no little pains to make matters worse. For instance, as it had not occurred to him that the Empire was passing through a phase that required careful study, he tried, though he was only a major, to obtain an appointment as prefect. At that time almost every one believed in Napoleon; his favor had increased the importance of every post. The prefectures, those empires on a small scale, could only be filled by men with great names, by the gentlemen of the household of his majesty the Emperor and King. The prefects by this time were Grand Viziers. These minions of the great man laughed at Major Diard's artless ambitions, and he was fain to solicit a sub-prefecture. His modest pretensions were ludicrously disproportioned to his vast wealth. After this ostentatious display of luxury, how could the millionaire leave the royal splendors of his house in Paris for Issoudun or Savenay? Would it not be a descent unworthy of his fortunes? Juana, who had come to understand our laws and the manners and customs of our administration, too late enlightened her husband. Diard, in his desperation, went begging to all the powers that be; but Diard met with nothing but rebuffs, no way was open to him. Then people judged him as the government had judged him, and passed his own verdict upon himself. Diard had been badly wounded

on the field of battle, and Diard had not been decorated. The quartermaster, who had gained wealth, but no esteem, found no place under the government, and society quite logically refused him the social position to which he had aspired. In short, in his own house the unfortunate man continually felt that his wife was his superior. He had come to feel it in spite of the "velvet glove" (if the metaphor is not too bold) that disguised from her husband the supremacy that astonished her herself, while she felt humiliated by it. It produced its effect upon Diard at last.

A man who plays a losing game like this is bound to lose heart, and to grow either a greater or a worse man for it; Diard's courage, or his passion, was sure to diminish, after repeated blows dealt to his self-love, and he made mistake upon mistake. From the first everything had been against him, even his own habits and his own character. The vices and virtues of the impulsive Provençal were equally patent. The fibres of his nature were like harp-strings, and every old friend had a place in his heart. He was as prompt to relieve a comrade in abject poverty as the distress of another of high rank; in short, he never forgot a friend, and filled his gilded rooms with poor wretches down on their luck. Beholding which things, the general of the old stamp (a species that will soon be extinct) was apt to greet Diard in an off-hand fashion, and address him with a patronizing, "Well, my dear fellow!" when they met. If the generals of the Empire concealed their insolence beneath an assumption of a soldier's bluff familiarity, the few people of fashion whom Diard met showed him the polite and well-bred contempt against which a self-made man is nearly always powerless. Diard's behavior and speech, like his half-Italian accent, his dress, and everything about him, combined to lower him in the eyes of ordinary minds; for the unwritten code of good manners and good taste is a binding tradition that only the greatest power can shake off. Such is the way of the world.

These details give a very imperfect idea of Juana's martyrdom. The pangs were endured one by one. Every social species contributed its pin-prick, and hers was a soul that would have welcomed dagger-thrusts in preference. It was intolerably painful to watch Diard receiving insults that he did not feel, insults that Juana must feel though they were not meant for her. A final and dreadful illumination came at last for her; it cast a light upon the future, and she knew all the sorrows that it held in store. She had seen already that her husband was quite incapable of mounting to the highest rung of the social ladder, but now she saw the inevitable depths to which he must fall when he should lose heart; and then a feeling of pity for Diard came over her.

The future that lay before her was very dark. Juana had never ceased to feel an overhanging dread of some evil, though whence it should come she knew not. This presentiment haunted her inmost soul, as contagion hovers in the air; but she was able to hide her anguish with smiles. She had reached the point when she no longer thought of herself.

Juana used her influence to persuade Diard to renounce his social ambitions, pointing out to him as a refuge the peaceful and gracious life of the domestic hearth. All their troubles came from without; why should they not shut out the world? In his own home Diard would find peace and respect; he should reign there. She felt that she had courage enough to undertake the trying task of making him happy, this man dissatisfied with himself. Her energy had increased with the difficulties of her life; she had within her the heroic spirit needed by a woman in her position, and felt the stirrings of those religious aspirations which are cherished by the guardian angel appointed to watch over a Christian soul, for this poetic superstitious fancy is an allegory that expresses the idea of the two natures within us.

Diard renounced his ambitions, closed his house, and literally shut himself up in it, if it is allowable to make use

of so familiar a phrase. But therein lay the danger. Diard was one of those centrifugal souls who must always be moving about. The luckless soldier's turn of mind was such that no sooner had he arrived in a place than this restless instinct forthwith drove him to depart. Natures of this kind have but one end in life; they must come and go unceasingly like the wheels spoken of in the Scriptures. It may have been that Diard would fain have escaped from himself. He was not weary of Juana; she had given him no cause to blame her, but with possession his passion for her had grown less absorbing, and his character asserted itself again.

Thenceforward his moments of despondency came more frequently; he gave way more often to his quick southern temper. The more virtuous and irreproachable a woman is, the more a man delights to find her in fault, if only to demonstrate his titular superiority; but if by chance she compels his respect, he must needs fabricate faults, and so between the husband and wife nothings are exaggerated and trifles become mountains. But Juana's meek patience and gentleness, untinged with the bitterness that women can infuse into their submission, gave no handle to this fault-finding of set purpose, the most unkind of all. Hers was, moreover, one of those noble natures for whom it is impossible to fail in duty; her pure and holy life shone in those eyes with the martyr's expression in them that haunted the imagination. Diard first grew weary, then he chafed, and ended by finding this lofty virtue an intolerable yoke. His wife's discretion left him no room for violent sensations, and he craved excitement. Thousands of such dramas lie hidden away in the souls of men and women, beneath the uninteresting surface of apparently simple and commonplace lives. It is difficult to choose an example from among the many scenes that last for so short a time, and leave such ineffaceable traces in a life; scenes that are almost always precursors of the calamity that is written in the destiny of most marriages. Still one scene may be described, because

it sharply marks the first beginnings of a misunderstanding between these two, and may in some degree explain the catastrophe of the story.

Juana had two children; luckily for her, they were both boys. The oldest was born seven months after her marriage; he was named Juan, and was like his mother. Two years after they came to Paris her second son was born; he resembled Diard and Juana, but he was more like Diard, whose names he bore. Juana had given the most tender care to little Francisco. For the five years of his life his mother was absorbed in this child; he had more than his share of kisses and caresses and playthings; and besides and beyond all this, his mother's penetrating eyes watched him continually. Juana studied his character even in the cradle, noticing heedfully his cries and movements, that she might direct his education. Juana seemed to have but that one child. The Provençal, seeing that Juan was almost neglected, began to take notice of the older boy. He would not ask himself whether the little one was the offspring of the short-lived love affair to which he owed Juana, and by a piece of rare flattery made of Juan his Benjamin. Of all the race inheritance of passions which preyed upon her, Mme. Diard gave way but to one—a mother's love; she loved her children with the same vehemence and intensity that La Marana had shown for her child in the first part of this story; but to this love she added a gracious delicacy of feeling, a quick and keen comprehension of the social virtues that it had been her pride to practice, in which she had found her recompense. The secret thought of the conscientious fulfillment of the duties of motherhood had been a crude element of poetry that left its impress on La Marana's life; but Juana could be a mother openly; it was her hourly consolation. Her own mother had been virtuous as other women are criminal, by stealth; she had stolen her illicit happiness, she had not known all the sweetness of secure possession. But Juana, whose life of virtue was as dreary as

her mother's life of sin, knew every hour the ineffable joys for which that mother had longed in vain. For her, as for La Marana, motherhood summed up all earthly affection, and both the Maranas from opposite causes had but this one comfort in their desolation. Perhaps Juana's love was the stronger, because, shut out from all other love, her children became all in all to her, and because a noble passion has this in common with vice: it grows by what it feeds upon. The mother and the gambler are alike insatiable.

Juana was touched by the generous pardon extended over Juan's head by Diard's fatherly affection, and thenceforward the relations between husband and wife were changed; the interest which Diard's Spanish wife had taken in him from a sense of duty only became a deep and sincere feeling. Had he been less inconsequent in his life, if fickleness and spasmodic changes of feeling on his part had not quenched that flicker of timid but real sympathy, Juana must surely have loved him; but, unluckily, Diard's character belonged to the quick-witted southern type, that has no continuity in its ideas; such men will be capable of heroic actions over night, and sink into nonentities on the morrow; often they are made to suffer for their virtues, often their worst defects contribute to their success; and for the rest, they are great when their good qualities are pressed into the service of an unflagging will. For two years Diard had been a prisoner in his home, a prisoner bound by the sweetest of all chains. He lived, almost against his will, beneath the influence of a wife who kept him amused, and was always bright and cheerful for him, a wife who devoted all her powers of coquetry to beguiling him into the ways of virtue; and yet all her ingenuity could not deceive him, and he knew this was not love.

Just about that time a murder caused a great sensation in Paris. A captain of the armies of the Republic had killed a woman in a paroxysm of debauchery. Diard told the story to Juana when he came home to dine. The officer, he said,

had taken his own life to avoid the ignominy of a trial and the infamous death of a criminal. At first Juana could not understand the reason for his conduct, and her husband was obliged to explain to her the admirable provision of the French law, which takes no proceedings against the dead.

"But, papa, didn't you tell us the other day that the King can pardon anybody?" asked Francisco.

"The King can only grant *life*," said Juan, nettled.

Diard and Juana watched this little scene with very different feeling. The tears of happiness in Juana's eyes as she glanced at her oldest boy let her husband see with fatal clearness into the real secrets of that hitherto inscrutable heart. Her older boy was Juana's own child; Juana knew his nature; she was sure of him and of his future; she worshiped him, and her great love was a secret known only to her child and to God. Juan, in his secret heart, gladly endured his mother's sharp speeches. What if she seemed to frown upon him in the presence of his father and brother, when she showered passionate kisses upon him when they were alone? Francisco was Diard's child, and Juana's care meant that she wished to check the growth of his father's faults in him and to develop his good qualities.

Juana, unconscious that she had spoken too plainly in that glance, took little Francisco on her knee; and, her sweet voice faltering somewhat with the gladness that Juan's answer had caused her, gave the younger boy the teaching suited to his childish mind.

"His training requires great care," the father said, speaking to Juana.

"Yes," she answered simply.

"But *Juan!*"

The tone in which the two words were uttered startled Mme. Diard. She looked up at her husband.

"Juan was born perfection," he added, and having thus delivered himself, he sat down and looked gloomily at his

wife. She was silent, so he went on, "You love one of *your* children better than the other."

"You know it quite well," she said.

"No!" returned Diard. "Until this moment I did not know which of them you loved the most."

"But neither of them has as yet caused me any sorrow," she answered quickly.

"No, but which of them has given you more joys?" he asked still more quickly.

"I have not kept any reckoning of them."

"Women are very deceitful!" cried Diard. "Do you dare to tell me that Juan is not the darling of your heart?"

"And if he were," she said, with gentle dignity, "do you mean that it would be a misfortune?"

"You have never loved me! If you had chosen, I might have won kingdoms for you with my sword. You know all that I have tried to do, sustained by one thought—a longing that you might care for me. Ah! if you had but loved me——"

"A woman who loves," said Juana, "lives in solitude far from the world. Is not that what we are doing?"

"Oh! I know, Juana, that you are never in the wrong."

The words, spoken with such intense bitterness, brought about a coolness between them that lasted the rest of their lives.

On the morrow of that fatal day, Diard sought out one of his old cronies, and with him sought distraction at the gaming-table. Unluckily, he won a great deal of money, and he began to play regularly. Little by little he slipped back into his old dissipated life. After a short time he no longer dined at home. A few months were spent in the enjoyment of the first pleasures of freedom; he made up his mind that he would not part with it, left the large apartments of the house to his wife, and took up his abode separately on the *entresol*. By the end of the year Diard and Juana only met once a day—at breakfast-time.

In a few words, like all gamblers, he had runs of good and bad luck; but as he was reluctant to touch his capital, he wished to have entire control of their income, and his wife accordingly ceased to take any part in the management of the household economy. Mistrust had succeeded to the boundless confidence that he had once placed in her. As to money matters, which had formerly been arranged by both husband and wife, he adopted the plan of a monthly allowance for her own expenses; they settled the amount of it together in the last of the confidential talks that form one of the most attractive charms of marriage.

The barrier of silence between two hearts is a real divorce, accomplished on the day when husband and wife say *we* no longer. When that day came, Juana knew that she was no longer a wife, but a mother; she was not unhappy, and did not seek to guess the reason of the misfortune. It was a great pity. Children consolidate, as it were, the lives of their parents, and the life that her husband led apart was to weave sadness and anguish for others as well as for Juana. Diard lost no time in making use of his newly-regained liberty; he played high, and lost and won enormous sums. He was a good and bold player, and gained a great reputation. The respect which he had failed to win in society in the days of the Empire was accorded now to the wealth that was risked upon a green table, to a talent for all and any of the games of chance of that period. Ambassadors, financiers, men with large fortunes, jaded pleasure-seekers in quest of excitement and extreme sensations admired Diard's play at their clubs; they rarely asked him to their houses, but they all played with him.

Diard became the fashion. Once or twice during the winter his independent spirit led him to give a fête to return the courtesies that he had received, and by glimpses Juana saw something of society again; there was a brief return of balls and banquets, of luxury and brilliantly-lighted rooms;

but all these things she regarded as a sort of duty levied upon her happiness and solitude.

The queen of these high festivals appeared in them like some creature fallen from an unknown world. Her simplicity that nothing had spoiled, a certain maidenliness of soul with which the changed conditions of her life had invested her, her beauty, her unaffected modesty, won sincere admiration. But Juana saw few women among her guests; and it was plain to her mind that if her husband had ordered his life differently without taking her into his confidence, he had not risen in the esteem of the world.

Diard was not always lucky. In three years he had squandered three-fourths of his fortune; but he drew from his passion for gambling sufficient energy to satisfy it. He had a large circle of acquaintance, and was hand and glove with certain swindlers on the Stock Exchange—gentry who, since the Revolution, have established the principle that robbery on a large scale is a mere *peccadillo*, transferring to the language of the counting-house the brazen epithets of the license of the eighteenth century.

Diard became a speculator, engaged in the peculiar kinds of business described as "shady" in the slang of the Palais. He managed to get hold of poor wretches ignorant of commercial red-tape, and weary of everlasting proceedings in liquidation; he would buy up their claims on the debtor's estate for a small sum, arrange the matter with the assignees in the course of an evening, and divide the spoil with the latter. When liquifiable debts were not to be found, he looked out for floating debts; he unearthed and revived claims in abeyance in Europe and America and uncivilized countries. When at the Restoration the debts incurred by the princes, the Republic, and the Empire were all paid, he took commissions on loans, on contracts for public works and enterprises of all kinds. In short, he committed legal robbery, like many another carefully masked delinquent behind the scenes

in the theatre of politics. Such thefts, if perpetrated by the light of a street lamp, would send the luckless offender to the hulks; but there is a virtue in the glitter of chandeliers and gilded ceilings that absolves the crimes committed beneath them.

Diard forestalled and regrated sugars; he sold places; to him belongs the credit of the invention of the "warming-pan;" he installed lay-figures in lucrative posts that must be held for a time to secure still better positions. Then he fell to meditating on bounties; he studied the loop-holes of the law, and carried on contraband trades against which no provision had been made. This traffic in high-places may be briefly described as a sort of commission agency; he received "so much per cent." on the purchase of fifteen votes which passed in a single night from the benches on the left to the benches on the right of the legislative chamber. In these days such things are neither misdemeanors nor felony; exploiting industry, the art of government, financial genius—these are the names by which they are called.

Public opinion put Diard in the pillory, where more than one clever man stood already to keep him company; there, indeed, you will find the aristocracy of this kind of talent—the upper chamber of civilized rascality.

Diard, therefore, was no commonplace gambler, no vulgar spendthrift who ends his career, in melodramas, as a beggar. Above a certain social altitude that kind of gambler is not to be found. In these days a bold scoundrel of this kind will die gloriously in the harness of vice in all the trappings of success: he will blow out his brains in a coach and six, and all that has been intrusted to him vanishes with him. Diard's talent determined him not to buy remorse too cheaply, and he joined this privileged class. He learned all the springs of government, made himself acquainted with all the secrets and the weaknesses of men in office, and held his own in the fiery furnace into which he had cast himself.

Mme. Diard knew nothing of the infernal life that her husband led. She was well content to be neglected, and did not ponder overmuch the reasons for his neglect. Her time was too well filled. She devoted all the money that she had to the education of her children; a very clever tutor was engaged for them, besides various masters. She meant to make men of her boys, to develop in them the faculty of reasoning clearly, but not at the expense of their imaginative powers. Nothing affected her now save through her children, and her own colorless life depressed her no longer. Juan and Francisco were for her what children are for a time for many mothers—a sort of expansion of her own existence. Diard had come to be a mere accident in her life. Since Diard had ceased to be a father and the head of the family, nothing bound Juana to her husband any longer, save a regard for appearances demanded by social conventions; yet she brought up her children to respect their father, shadowy and unreal as that fatherhood had become; indeed, her husband's continual absence from home helped her to maintain the fiction of his high character. If Diard had lived in the house, all Juana's efforts must have been in vain. Her children were too quick and bright not to judge their father, and this process is a moral parricide.

At length, however, Juana's indifference changed to a feeling of dread. She felt that sooner or later her husband's manner of life must affect the children's future. Day by day that old presentiment of coming evil gathered definiteness and strength. On the rare occasions when Juana saw her husband, she would glance at his hollow cheeks, at his face grown haggard with the vigils he kept, and wrinkled with violent emotions; and Diard almost trembled before the clear, penetrating eyes. At such times her husband's assumed gaiety alarmed her even more than the dark look that his face wore in repose, when for a moment he happened to forget the part that he was playing. He feared his wife as the criminal fears

the headsman. Juana saw in him a disgrace on her children's name; and Diard dreaded her, she was like some passionless Vengeance, a Justice with unchanging brows, with the arm that should one day strike always suspended above him.

One day, about fifteen years after his marriage, Diard found himself without resources. He owed a hundred thousand crowns, and was possessed of a bare hundred thousand francs. His mansion (all that he possessed beside ready money) was mortgaged beyond its value. A few more days, and the prestige of enormous wealth must fade; and when those days of grace had expired, no helping hand would be stretched out, no purse would be open for him. Nothing but unlooked-for luck could save him now from the slough into which he must fall; and he would but sink the deeper in it, men would scorn him the more because for a while they had estimated him at more than his just value.

Very opportunely, therefore, he learned that with the beginning of the season diplomatists and foreigners of distinction flocked to watering-places in the Pyrenees, that play ran high at these resorts, and that the visitors were doubtless well able to pay their losings. So he determined to set out at once for the Pyrenees. He had no mind to leave his wife in Paris; some of his creditors might enlighten her as to his awkward position, and he wished to keep it secret, so he took Juana and the two children. He would not allow the tutor to go with them, and made some difficulties about Juana's maid, who, with a single manservant, composed their traveling suite. His tone was curt and peremptory; his energy seemed to have returned to him. This hasty journey sent a shiver of dread to Juana's soul; her penetration was at fault, she could not imagine the why and wherefore of their leaving Paris. Her husband seemed to be in high spirits on the way; and during the time spent together perforce in the traveling carriage, he took more and more notice of the children, and was more kindly to the children's mother. And yet—every

day brought new and dark forebodings for Juana, the forebodings of a mother's heart. These inward warnings, even when there is no apparent reason for them, are seldom vain, and the veil that hides the future grows thin for a mother's eyes.

Diard took a house, not large, but very nicely furnished, situated in one of the quietest parts of Bordeaux. It happened to be a corner house with a large garden, surrounded on three sides by streets, and on the fourth by the wall of a neighboring dwelling. Diard paid the rent in advance, and installed his wife and family, leaving Juana fifty louis, a sum barely sufficient to meet the housekeeping expenses for three months. Mme. Diard made no comment on this unwonted niggardliness. When her husband told her that he was about to go to the Baths, and that she was to remain in Bordeaux, she made up her mind that the children should learn the Spanish and Italian languages thoroughly, and that they should read with her the great masterpieces of either tongue.

With this object in view, Juana's life should be retired and simple, and in consequence her expenses would be few. Her own woman waited upon them; and, to simplify the housekeeping, she arranged on the morrow of Diard's departure to have their meals sent in from a restaurant. Everything was provided for until her husband's return, and she had no money left. Her amusements must consist in occasional walks with the children. She was now a woman of thirty-three; her beauty had developed to its fullest extent, she was in the full splendor of her maturity. Scarcely had she appeared in Bordeaux before people talked of nothing but the lovely Spanish lady. She received a first love-letter, and thenceforth confined her walks to her own garden.

At first Diard had a run of luck at the Baths. He won three hundred thousand francs in two months; but it never occurred to him to send any money to his wife, he meant to keep as large a sum as possible by him, and to play for yet

higher stakes. Towards the end of the last month the Marquis di Montefiore came to the Baths, preceded by a reputation for a fine figure and great wealth, for the match that he had made with an English lady of family, and most of all for a passion for gambling. Diard waited for his old comrade in arms, to add the spoils to his winnings. A gambler with something like four hundred thousand francs at his back can command most things; Diard felt confident in his luck, and renewed his acquaintance with Montefiore. That gentleman received him coldly, but they played together, and Diard lost everything.

"Montefiore, my dear fellow," said the sometime quartermaster, after a turn round the room in which he had ruined himself, "I owe you a hundred thousand francs; but I have left my money at Bordeaux, where my wife is staying."

As a matter of fact, Diard had notes for the amount in his pockets at that moment; but, with the self-possession of a man accustomed to take in all the possibilities of a situation at a glance, he still hoped something from the incalculable chances of the gaming-table. Montefiore had expressed a desire to see something of Bordeaux; and if Diard were to settle at once with him, he would have nothing left, and could not have his "revenge." A "revenge" will sometimes more than make good all previous losses. All these burning hopes depended on the answer that the Marquis might give.

"Let it stand, my dear fellow," said Montefiore; "we will go to Bordeaux together. I am rich enough now in all conscience; why should I take an old comrade's money?"

Three days later, Diard and the Italian were at Bordeaux. Montefiore offered the Provençal his revenge. In the course of an evening, which Diard began by paying down the hundred thousand francs, he lost two hundred thousand more upon parole. He was as light-hearted over his losses as if he could swim in gold. It was eleven o'clock, and a glorious night, surely Montefiore must wish to breathe the fresh air

under the open sky and to take a walk to cool down a little after the excitement of play; Diard suggested that the Italian should accompany him to his house and take a cup of tea there when the money was paid over.

"But Mme. Diard!" queried Montefiore.

"Pshaw!" answered the Provençal.

They went downstairs together; but, before leaving the house, Diard went into the dining-room, asked for a glass of water, and walked about the room as he waited for it. In this way he managed to secrete a tiny steel knife with a handle of mother-of-pearl, such as is used at dessert for fruit; the thing had not yet been put away in its place.

"Where do you live?" asked Montefiore, as they crossed the court; "I must leave word, so as to have the carriage sent round for me."

Diard gave minute directions.

"Of course, I am perfectly safe as long as I am with you, you see," said Montefiore in a low voice, as he took Diard's arm; "but if I came back by myself, and some scamp were to follow me, I should be worth killing."

"Then have you money about you?"

"Oh! next to nothing," said the cautious Italian, "only my winnings. But they would make a pretty fortune for a penniless rascal; he might take brevet rank as an honest man afterwards for the rest of his life, that I know."

Diard took the Italian into a deserted street. He had noticed the gateway of a single house in it at the end of a sort of avenue of trees, and that there were high dark walls on either side. Just as they reached the end of this road he had the audacity to ask his friend, in soldierly fashion, to walk on. Montefiore understood Diard's meaning, and turned to go with him. Scarcely had they set foot in the shadow, when Diard sprang like a tiger upon the Marquis, tripped him up, boldly set his foot on his victim's throat, and plunged the knife again and again into his heart, till the blade snapped

off short in his body. Then he searched Montefiore, took his money, his pocket-book, and everything that the Marquis had.

But though Diard had set about his work in a frenzy that left him perfectly clear-headed, and completed it with the deftness of a pickpocket; though he had taken his victim adroitly by surprise, Montefiore had had time to shriek "Murder!" once or twice, a shrill, far-reaching cry that must have sent a thrill of horror through many sleepers, and his dying groans were fearful to hear.

Diard did not know that even as they turned into the avenue a crowd of people returning home from the theatre had reached the upper end of the street. They had heard Montefiore's dying cries, though the Provençal had tried to stifle the sounds, never relaxing the pressure of his foot upon the murdered man's throat until at last they ceased.

The high walls still echoed with dying groans which guided the crowd to the spot whence they came. The sound of many feet filled the avenue and rang through Diard's brain. The murderer did not lose his head; he came out from under the trees, and walked very quietly along the street, as if he had been drawn thither by curiosity and saw that he had come too late to be of any use. He even turned to make sure of the distance that separated him from the new-comers, and saw them all rush into the avenue, save one man, who not unnaturally stood still to watch Diard's movements.

"There he lies! There he lies!" shouted voices from the avenue. They had caught sight of Montefiore's dead body in front of the great house. The gateway was shut fast, and after diligent search they could not find the murderer in the alley.

As soon as he heard the shout, Diard knew that he had got the start; he seemed to have the strength of a lion in him and the fleetness of a stag; he began to run, nay, he flew. He saw, or fancied that he saw, a second crowd at the other end of the road, and darted down a side street. But even as

he fled, windows were opened, and rows of heads were thrust out, lights and shouting issued from every door; to Diard, running for dear life, it seemed as if he were rushing through a tumult of cries and swaying lights. As he fled straight along the road before him, his legs stood him in such good stead that he left the crowd behind; but he could not keep out of sight of the windows, nor avoid the watchful eyes that traversed the length and breadth of a street faster than he could fly.

In the twinkling of an eye, soldiers, gendarmes, and householders were all astir. Some in their zeal had gone to wake up commissaries of police, others stood by the dead body. The alarm spread out into the suburbs in the direction of the fugitive (whom it followed like a conflagration from street to street) and into the heart of the town, where it reached the authorities. Diard heard as in a dream the hurrying feet, the yells of a whole horror-stricken city. But his ideas were still clear; he still preserved his presence of mind, and he rubbed his hands against the walls as he ran.

At last he reached the garden wall of his own house. He thought that he had thrown his pursuers off the scent. The place was perfectly silent save for the far-off murmur of the city, scarcely louder there than the sound of the sea. He dipped his hands into a runnel of clear water and drank. Then, looking about him, he saw a heap of loose stones by the roadside, and hastened to bury his spoils beneath it, acting on some dim notion such as crosses a criminal's mind when he has not yet found a consistent tale to account for his actions, and hopes to establish his innocence by lack of proofs against him. When this was accomplished, he tried to look serene and calm, forced a smile, and knocked gently at his own door, hoping that no one had seen him. He looked up at the house front and saw a light in his wife's windows. And then in his agitation of spirit visions of Juana's peaceful life rose before him; he saw her sitting there in the candle-

light with her children on either side of her, and the vision smote his brain like a blow from a hammer. The waiting-woman opened the door, Diard entered, and hastily shut it to again. He dared to breathe more freely, but he remembered that he was covered with perspiration, and sent the maid up to Juana, while he stayed below in the darkness. He wiped his face with a handkerchief and set his clothes in order, as a coxcomb smooths his coat before calling upon a pretty woman; then for a moment he stood in the moonlight examining his hands; he passed them over his face, and with unspeakable joy found that there was no trace of blood upon him, doubtless his victim's wounds had bled internally.

He went up to Juana's room, and his manner was as quiet and composed as if he had come home after the theatre, to sleep. As he climbed the stairs, he could think over his position, and summed it up in a phrase—he must leave the house and reach the harbor. These ideas did not cross his brain in words; he saw them written in letters of fire upon the darkness. Once down at the harbor, he could lie in hiding during the day, and return at night for the treasure; then he would creep with it like a rat into the hold of some vessel, and leave the port, no one suspecting that he was on board. For all these things money was wanted in the first place. And he had nothing. The waiting-woman came with a light.

"Félicie," he said, "do you not hear that noise? people are shouting in the street. Go and find out what it is and let me know——"

His wife in her white dressing-gown was sitting at a table, reading Cervantes in Spanish with Francisco and Juan; the two children's eyes followed the text while their mother read aloud. All three of them stopped and looked up at Diard, who stood with his hands in his pockets, surprised perhaps by the surroundings, the peaceful scene, the fair faces of the woman and the children in the softly-lit room. It was like a

living picture of a Madonna with her son and the little Saint John on either side.

"Juana, I have something to say to you."

"What is it?" she asked. In her husband's wan and sallow face she read the news of this calamity that she had expected daily; it had come at last.

"Nothing, but I should like to speak to you—to you, quite alone," and he fixed his eyes on the two little boys.

"Go to your room, my darlings, and go to bed," said Juana. "Say your prayers without me."

The two boys went away in silence, with the uninquisitive obedience of children who have been well brought up.

"Dear Juana," Diard began in coaxing tones, "I left you very little money, and I am very sorry for it now. Listen, since I relieved you of the cares of your household by giving you an allowance, perhaps you may have saved a little money, as all women do?"

"No," answered Juana, "I have nothing. You did not allow anything for the expenses of the children's education. I am not reproaching you at all, dear; I only remind you that you forgot about it, to explain how it is that I have no money. All that you gave me I spent on lessons and masters——"

"That will do!" Diard broke in. "Holy thunder! time is precious. Have you no jewels?"

"You know quite well that I never wear them."

"Then there is not a *sou* in the house!" cried Diard, like a man bereft of his senses.

"Why do you cry out?" she asked.

"Juana," he began, "I have just killed a man!"

Juana rushed to the children's room, and returned, shutting all the doors after her.

"Your sons must not hear a word of this," she said; "but whom can you have fought with?"

"Montefiore," he answered.

"Ah!" she said, and a sigh broke from her; "he is the one man whom you had a right to kill——"

"There were plenty of reasons why he should die by my hand. But let us lose no time. Money, I want money, in God's name! They may be on my track. We did not fight, Juana, I—I killed him."

"Killed him!" she cried. "But how——?"

"Why, how does one kill a man? He had robbed me of all I had at play; and I have taken it back again. Juana, since we have no money, you might go now, while everything is quiet, and look for my money under the heap of stones at the end of the road; you know the place."

"Then," said Juana, "you have robbed him."

"What business is it of yours? Fly I must, mustn't I? Have you any money?—— They are after me!"

"Who?"

"The authorities.'

Juana left the room, and came back suddenly.

"Here," she cried, holding out a trinket, but standing at a distance from him; this is Doña Lagounia's cross. There are four rubies in it, and the stones are very valuable; so I have been told. Be quick, fly, fly—— why don't you go?"

"Félicie has not come back," he said in dull amazement. "Can they have arrested her?"

Juana dropped the cross on the edge of the table, and sprang towards the windows that looked out upon the street. Outside in the moonlight she saw a row of soldiers taking their places in absolute silence along the wall. She came back again; to all appearance she was perfectly calm.

"You have not a minute to lose," she said to her husband; "you must escape through the garden. Here is the key of the little door."

A last counsel of prudence led her, however, to give a glance over the garden. In the shadows under the trees she saw the silvery gleam of the metal rims of the gendarmes'

caps. She even heard a vague murmur of a not far-distant crowd; sentinels were keeping back the people gathered together by curiosity at the further ends of the streets by which the house was approached.

As a matter of fact, Diard had been seen from the windows of the houses; the maidservant had been frightened, and afterwards arrested; and, acting on this information, the military and the crowd had soon blocked the ends of the streets that lay on two sides of the house. A dozen gendarmes, coming off duty at the theatres, were posted outside; others had climbed the wall, and were searching the garden, a proceeding authorized by the serious nature of the crime.

"Monsieur," said Juana, "it is too late. The whole town is aroused."

Diard rushed from window to window, with the wild recklessness of a bird that dashes frantically against every pane. Juana stood absorbed in her thoughts.

"Where can I hide?" he asked.

He looked at the chimney, and Juana stared at the two empty chairs. To her it seemed only a moment since her children were sitting there. Just at that moment the gate opened, and the courtyard echoed with the sound of many footsteps.

"Juana, dear Juana, for pity's sake, tell me what to do."

"I will tell you," she said; "I will save you."

"Ah! you will be my good angel!"

Again Juana returned with one of Diard's pistols; she held it out to him, and turned her head away. Diard did not take it. Juana heard sounds from the courtyard; they had brought in the dead body of the Marquis to confront the murderer. She came away from the window and looked at Diard; he was white and haggard; his strength failed him; he made as if he would sink into a chair.

"For your children's sake," she said, thrusting the weapon into his hands.



"IS THAT M. DIARD"

"But, my dear Juana, my little Juana, do you really believe that——? Juana, is there such need of haste?—— I would like to kiss you before——"

The gendarmes were on the stairs. Then Juana took up the pistol, held it at Diard's head; with a firm grasp on his throat she held him tightly in spite of his cries, fired, and let the weapon fall to the ground.

The door was suddenly flung open at that moment. The public prosecutor, followed by a magistrate and his clerk, a doctor, and the gendarmes, all the instruments of man's justice, appeared upon the scene.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is that M. Diard?" answered the public prosecutor, pointing to the body lying bent double upon the floor.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Your dress is covered with blood, madame——"

"Do you not understand how it is?" asked Juana.

She went over to the little table and sat down there, and took up the volume of Cervantes; her face was colorless; she strove to control her inward nervous agitation.

"Leave the room," said the public prosecutor to the gendarmes. He made a sign to the magistrate and the doctor, and they remained.

"Madame, under the circumstances, we can only congratulate you on your husband's death. If he was carried away by passion, at any rate he has died like a soldier, and it is vain for justice to pursue him now. Yet little as we may desire to intrude upon you at such a time, the law obliges us to inquire into a death by violence. Permit us to do our duty."

"May I change my dress?" she asked, laying down the volume.

"Yes, madame, but you must bring it here. The doctor will doubtless require it——"

"It would be too painful to Mme. Diard to be present

while I go through my task," said the doctor, understanding the public prosecutor's suspicions. "Will you permit her, gentlemen, to remain in the adjoining room?"

The two functionaries approved the kindly doctor's suggestion, and Félicie went to her mistress. Then the magistrate and the public prosecutor spoke together for a while in a low voice. It is the unhappy lot of administrators of justice to be in duty bound to suspect everybody and everything. By dint of imagining evil motives, and every possible combination that they may bring about, so as to discover the truth that lurks beneath the most inconsistent actions, it is impossible but that their dreadful office should in course of time dry up the source of the generous impulses to which they may never yield. If the sensibilities of the surgeon who explores the mysteries of the body are blunted by degrees, what becomes of the inner sensibility of the judge who is compelled to probe the intricate recesses of the human conscience? Magistrates are the first victims of their profession; their progress is one perpetual mourning for their lost illusions, and the crimes that hang so heavily about the necks of criminals weigh no less upon their judges. An old man seated in the tribunal of justice is sublime; but do we not shudder to see a young face there? In this case the magistrate was a young man, and it was his duty to say to the public prosecutor, "Was the woman her husband's accomplice, do you think? Must we take proceedings? Ought she, in your opinion, to be examined?"

By way of reply, the public prosecutor shrugged his shoulders; apparently it was a matter of indifference.

"Montefiore and Diard," he remarked, "were a pair of notorious scamps. The servant-girl knew nothing about the crime. We need not go any further."

The doctor was making his examination of Diard's body, and dictating his report to the clerk. Suddenly he rushed into Juana's room.

"Madame——"

Juana, who had changed her blood-stained dress, confronted the doctor.

"You shot your husband, did you not?" he asked, bending to say the words in her ear.

"Yes, monsieur," the Spaniard answered.

"*And from circumstantial evidence*" (the doctor went on dictating) "*we conclude that the said Diard has taken his life by his own act.* Have you finished?" he asked the clerk after a pause.

"Yes," answered the scribe.

The doctor put his signature to the document. Juana glanced at him, and could scarcely keep back the tears that, for a moment, filled her eyes.

"Gentlemen," she said, and she turned to the public prosecutor, "I am a stranger, a Spaniard. I do not know the law. I know no one in Bordeaux. I entreat you to do me this kindness, will you procure me a passport for Spain?"

"One moment!" exclaimed the magistrate. "Madame, what has become of the sum of money that was stolen from the Marquis di Montefiore?"

"M. Diard said something about a heap of stones beneath which he had hidden it," she answered.

"Where?"

"In the street."

The two functionaries exchanged glances. Juana's involuntary start was sublime. She appealed to the doctor.

"Can they suspect me?" she said in his ear; "suspect *me* of some villainy? The heap of stones is sure to be somewhere at the end of the garden. Go yourself, I beg of you, and look for it and find the money."

The doctor went, accompanied by the magistrate, and found Montefiore's pocket-book.

Two days later Juana sold her golden cross to meet the expenses of the journey. As she went with her two children

to the diligence in which they were about to travel to the Spanish frontier, some one called her name in the street. It was her dying mother, who was being taken to the hospital; she had caught a glimpse of her daughter through a slit in the curtains of the stretcher on which she lay. Juana bade them carry the stretcher into a gateway, and there for the last time the mother and daughter met. Low as their voices were while they spoke together, Juan overheard these words of farewell—

"Mother, die in peace; I have suffered for you all."

PARIS, *November*, 1832.

THE EXECUTIONER.

(*El Verdugo.*)

To Martinez de la Rosa.

MIDNIGHT had just sounded from the belfry tower of the little town of Menda. A young French officer, leaning over the parapet of the long terrace at the further end of the castle gardens, seemed to be unusually absorbed in deep thought for one who led the reckless life of a soldier; but it must be admitted that never was the hour, the scene, and the night more favorable to meditation.

The blue dome of the cloudless sky of Spain was overhead; he was looking out over the coy windings of a lovely valley lit by the uncertain starlight and the soft radiance of the moon. The officer, leaning against an orange tree in blossom, could also see, a hundred feet below him, the town of Menda, which seemed to nestle for shelter from the north wind at the foot of the crags on which the castle itself was built. He turned his head and caught sight of the sea; the moonlit waves made a broad frame of silver for the landscape.

There were lights in the castle windows. The mirth and movement of a ball, the sounds of the violins, the laughter of the officers and their partners in the dance were borne towards him and blended with the far-off murmur of the waves. The cool night had a certain bracing effect upon his frame, wearied as he had been by the heat of the day. He seemed to bathe in the air, made fragrant by the strong, sweet scent of flowers and of aromatic trees in the gardens.

The castle of Menda belonged to a Spanish grandee, who was living in it at that time with his family. All through the

evening the oldest daughter of the house had watched the officer with such a wistful interest that the Spanish lady's compassionate eyes might well have set the young Frenchman dreaming. Clara was beautiful; and although she had three brothers and a sister, the broad lands of the Marqués de Légañès appeared to be sufficient warrant for Victor Marchand's belief that the young lady would have a splendid dowry. But how could he dare to imagine that the most fanatical believer in blue blood in all Spain would give his daughter to the son of a grocer in Paris? Moreover, the French were hated. It was because the Marquis had been suspected of an attempt to raise the country in favor of Ferdinand VII. that General G——, who governed the province, had stationed Victor Marchand's battalion in the little town of Menda to overawe the neighboring districts which received the Marqués de Légañès' word as law. A recent despatch from Marshal Ney had given ground for fear that the English might ere long effect a landing on the coast, and had indicated the Marquis as being in correspondence with the Cabinet in London.

In spite, therefore, of the welcome with which the Spaniards had received Victor Marchand and his soldiers, that officer was always on his guard. As he went towards the terrace, where he had just surveyed the town and the districts confided to his charge, he had been asking himself what construction he ought to put upon the friendliness which the Marquis had invariably shown him, and how to reconcile the apparent tranquillity of the country with his general's uneasiness. But a moment later these thoughts were driven from his mind by the instinct of caution and very legitimate curiosity. It had just struck him that there was a very fair number of lights in the town below. Although it was the Feast of Saint James, he himself had issued orders that very morning that all lights must be put out in the town at the hour prescribed by military regulations. The castle alone had been excepted in this

order. Plainly here and there he saw the gleam of bayonets, where his own men were at their accustomed posts; but in the town there was a solemn silence, and not a sign that the Spaniards had given themselves up to the intoxication of a festival. He tried vainly for a while to explain this breach of the regulations on the part of the inhabitants; the mystery seemed but so much the more obscure because he had left instructions with some of his officers to do police duty that night, and make the rounds of the town.

With the impetuosity of youth, he was about to spring through a gap in the wall preparatory to a rapid scramble down the rocks, thinking to reach a small guard-house at the nearest entrance into the town more quickly than by the beaten track, when a faint sound stopped him. He fancied that he could hear the light footstep of a woman along the graveled garden walk. He turned his head and saw no one; for one moment his eyes were dazzled by the wonderful brightness of the sea, the next he saw a sight so ominous that he stood stock-still with amazement, thinking that his senses must be deceiving him. The white moonbeams lighted the horizon, so that he could distinguish the sails of ships still a considerable distance out at sea. A shudder ran through him; he tried to persuade himself that this was some optical delusion brought about by chance effects of moonlight on the waves; and even as he made the attempt, a hoarse voice called to him by name. The officer glanced at the gap in the wall; saw a soldier's head slowly emerge from it, and knew the grenadier whom he had ordered to accompany him to the castle.

"Is that you, commandant?"

"Yes. What is it?" returned the young officer in a low voice. A kind of presentiment warned him to act cautiously.

"Those beggars down there are creeping about like worms; and, by your leave, I came as quickly as I could to report my little reconnoitring expedition."

"Go on," answered Victor Marchand.

"I have just been following a man from the castle who came round this way with a lantern in his hand. A lantern is a suspicious matter with a vengeance! I don't imagine that there was any need for that good Christian to be lighting tapers at this time of night. Says I to myself, 'They mean to gobble us up!' and I set myself to dogging his heels; and that is how I found out that there is a pile of faggots, sir, two or three steps away from here."

Suddenly a dreadful shriek rang through the town below, and cut the man short. A light flashed in the commandant's face, and the poor grenadier dropped down with a bullet through his head. Ten paces away a bonfire flared up like a conflagration. The sounds of music and laughter ceased all at once in the ballroom; the silence of death, broken only by groans, succeeded to the rhythmical murmur of the festival. Then the roar of cannon sounded from across the white plain of the sea.

A cold sweat broke out on the young officer's forehead. He had left his sword behind. He knew that his men had been murdered, and that the English were about to land. He knew that if he lived he would be dishonored; he saw himself summoned before a court-martial. For a moment his eyes measured the depth of the valley; the next, just as he was about to spring down, Clara's hand caught his.

"Fly!" she cried. "My brothers are coming after me to kill you. Down yonder at the foot of the cliff you will find Juanito's Andalusian. Go!"

She thrust him away. The young man gazed at her in dull bewilderment; but obeying the instinct of self-preservation, which never deserts even the bravest, he rushed across the park in the direction pointed out to him, springing from rock to rock in places unknown to any save the goats. He heard Clara calling to her brothers to pursue him; he heard the footsteps of the murderers; again and again he heard their balls

whistling about his ears; but he reached the foot of the cliff, found the horse, mounted, and fled with lightning speed.

A few hours later the young officer reached General G——'s quarters, and found him at dinner with the staff.

"I put my life in your hands!" cried the haggard and exhausted commandant of Menda.

He sank into a seat, and told his horrible story. It was received with an appalling silence.

"It seems to me that you are more to be pitied than to blame," the terrible general said at last. "You are not answerable for the Spaniard's crimes, and, unless the marshal decides otherwise, I acquit you."

These words brought but cold comfort to the unfortunate officer.

"When the Emperor comes to hear about it!" he cried.

"Oh, he will be for having you shot," said the general, "but we shall see. Now we will say no more about this," he added severely, "except to plan a revenge that shall strike a salutary terror into this country, where they carry on war like savages."

An hour later a whole regiment, a detachment of cavalry, and a convoy of artillery were upon the road. The general and Victor marched at the head of the column. The soldiers had been told of the fate of their comrades, and their rage knew no bounds. The distance between headquarters and the town of Menda was crossed at a wellnigh miraculous speed. Whole villages by the way were found to be under arms; every one of the wretched hamlets was surrounded and their inhabitants decimated.

It so chanced that the English vessels still lay out at sea, and were no nearer the shore, a fact inexplicable until it was known afterwards that they were artillery transports which had outsailed the rest of the fleet. So the townsmen of Menda, left without the assistance on which they had reckoned when the sails of the English appeared, were surrounded

by French troops almost before they had had time to strike a blow. This struck such terror into them that they offered to surrender at discretion. An impulse of devotion, no isolated instance in the history of the Peninsula, led the actual slayers of the French to offer to give themselves up; seeking in this way to save the town, for from the general's reputation for cruelty it was feared that he would give Menda over to the flames, and put the whole population to the sword. General G—— took their offer, stipulating that every soul in the castle from the lowest servant to the Marquis should likewise be given up to him. These terms being accepted, the general promised to spare the lives of the rest of the townsmen, and to prohibit his soldiers from pillaging or setting fire to the town. A heavy contribution was levied, and the wealthiest inhabitants were taken as hostages to guarantee payment within twenty-four hours.

The general took every necessary precaution for the safety of his troops, provided for the defense of the place, and refused to billet his men in the houses of the town. After they had bivouacked, he went up to the castle and entered it as a conqueror. The whole family of Légañès and their household were gagged, shut up in the great ballroom, and closely watched. From the windows it was easy to see the whole length of the terrace above the town.

The staff was established in an adjoining gallery, where the general forthwith held a council as to the best means of preventing the landing of the English. An aide-de-camp was despatched to Marshal Ney, orders were issued to plant batteries along the coast, and then the general and his staff turned their attention to their prisoners. The two hundred Spaniards given up by the townsfolk were shot down then and there upon the terrace. And after this military execution, the general gave orders to erect gibbets to the number of the prisoners in the ballroom in the same place, and to send for the hangman out of the town. Victor took advantage of the

interval before dinner to pay a visit to the prisoners. He soon came back to the general.

"I am come in haste," he faltered out, "to ask a favor."

"*You!*" exclaimed the general, with bitter irony in his tones.

"Alas!" answered Victor, "it is a sorry favor. The Marquis has seen them erecting the gallows, and hopes that you will commute the punishment for his family; he entreats you to have the nobles beheaded."

"Granted," said the general.

"He further asks that they may be allowed the consolations of religion, and that they may be unbound; they give you their word that they will not attempt to escape."

"That I permit," said the general, "but you are answerable for them."

"The old noble offers you all that he has if you will pardon his youngest son."

"Really!" cried the commander. "His property is forfeited already to King Joseph." He paused; a contemptuous thought set wrinkles in his forehead, as he added, "I will do better than they ask. I understand what he means by that last request of his. Very good. Let him hand down his name to posterity; but whenever it is mentioned, all Spain shall remember his treason and its punishment! I will give the fortune and his life to any one of the sons who will do the executioner's office. There, don't talk any more about them to me."

Dinner was ready. The officers sat down to satisfy an appetite whetted by hunger. Only one among them was absent from the table—that one was Victor Marchand. After long hesitation, he went to the ballroom, and heard the last sighs of the proud house of Légañès. He looked sadly at the scene before him. Only last night, in this very room, he had seen their faces whirl past him in the waltz, and he shuddered to think that those girlish heads with those of the three

young brothers must fall in a brief space by the executioner's sword. There sat the father and mother, their three sons and two daughters, perfectly motionless, bound to their gilded chairs. Eight serving-men stood with their hands tied behind them. These fifteen prisoners, under sentence of death, exchanged grave glances; it was difficult to read the thoughts that filled them from their eyes, but profound resignation and regret that their enterprise should have failed so completely was written on more than one brow.

The impassive soldiers who guarded them respected the grief of their bitter enemies. A gleam of curiosity lighted up all faces when Victor came in. He gave orders that the condemned prisoners should be unbound, and himself unfastened the cords that held Clara a prisoner. She smiled mournfully at him. The officer could not refrain from lightly touching the young girl's arm; he could not help admiring her dark hair, her slender waist. She was a true daughter of Spain, with a Spanish complexion, a Spaniard's eyes, blacker than the raven's wing beneath their long curving lashes.

"Did you succeed?" she asked, with a mournful smile, in which a certain girlish charm still lingered.

Victor could not repress a groan. He looked from the faces of the three brothers to Clara, and again at the three young Spaniards. The first, the oldest of the family, was a man of thirty. He was short, and somewhat ill made; he looked haughty and proud, but a certain distinction was not lacking in his bearing, and he was apparently no stranger to the delicacy of feeling for which in olden times the chivalry of Spain was famous. His name was Juanito. The second son, Felipe, was about twenty years of age; he was like his sister Clara; and the youngest was a child of eight. In the features of little Manuel a painter would have discerned something of that Roman steadfastness which David has given to the children's faces in his Republican *genre* pictures. The old Marquis, with his white hair, might have come down from

some canvas of Murillo's. Victor threw back his head in despair after this survey; how should one of these accept the general's offer! nevertheless he ventured to intrust it to Clara. A shudder ran through the Spanish girl, but she recovered herself almost instantly, and knelt before her father.

"Father," she said, "bid Juanito swear to obey the commands that you shall give him, and we shall be content."

The Marquesa trembled with hope, but as she leaned towards her husband and learned Clara's hideous secret the mother fainted away. Juanito understood it all, and leaped up like a caged lion. Victor took it upon himself to dismiss the soldiers, after receiving an assurance of entire submission from the Marquis. The servants were led away and given over to the hangman and their fate. When only Victor remained on guard in the room, the old Marqués de Légañès rose to his feet.

"Juanito," he said. For all answer Juanito bowed his head in a way that meant refusal; he sank down into his chair, and fixed tearless eyes upon his father and mother in an intolerable gaze. Clara went over to him and sat on his knee; she put her arms about him, and pressed kisses on his eyelids, saying gaily—

"Dear Juanito, if you but knew how sweet death at your hands will be to me! I shall not be compelled to submit to the hateful touch of the hangman's fingers. You will snatch me away from the evils to come and—— Dear, kind Juanito, you could not bear the thought of my belonging to any one—well, then?"

The velvet eyes gave Victor a burning glance; she seemed to try to awaken in Juanito's heart his hatred for the French.

"Take courage," said his brother Felipe, "or our well-nigh royal line will be extinct."

Suddenly Clara sprang to her feet. The group round Juanito fell back, and the son who had rebelled with such good reason was confronted with his aged father.

"Juanito, I command you!" said the Marquis solemnly.

The yount Count gave no sign, and his father fell on his knees; Clara, Manuel, and Felipe unconsciously followed his example, stretching out suppliant hands to him who must save their family from oblivion, and seeming to echo their father's words.

"Can it be that you lack the fortitude of a Spaniard and true sensibility, my son? Do you mean to keep me on my knees? What right have you to think of your own life and of your own sufferings? Is this my son, madame?" the old Marquis added, turning to his wife.

"He will consent to it," cried the mother in agony of soul. She had seen a slight contraction of Juanito's brows which she, his mother, alone understood.

Mariquita, the second daughter, knelt, with her slender clinging arms about her mother; the hot tears fell from her eyes, and her little brother Manuel upbraided her for weeping. Just at that moment the castle chaplain came in; the whole family surrounded him and led him up to Juanito. Victor felt that he could endure the sight no longer, and with a sign to Clara he hurried from the room to make one last effort for them. He found the general in boisterous spirits; the officers were still sitting over their dinner and drinking together; the wine had loosened their tongues.

An hour later, a hundred of the principal citizens of Menda were summoned to the terrace by the general's orders to witness the execution of the family of Légañès. A detachment had been told off to keep order among the Spanish townsfolk, who were marshaled beneath the gallows whereon the Marquis' servants hung; the feet of those martyrs of their cause all but touched the citizens' heads. Thirty paces away stood the block; the blade of a scimitar glittered upon it, and the executioner stood by in case Juanito should refuse at the last.

The deepest silence prevailed, but before long it was broken by the sound of many footsteps, the measured tramp of a picket

of soldiers, and the jingling of their weapons. Mingled with these came other noises—loud talk and laughter from the dinner-table where the officers were sitting; just as the music and the sound of the dancers' feet had drowned the preparations for last night's treacherous butchery.

All eyes turned to the castle, and beheld the family of nobles coming forth with incredible composure to their death. Every brow was serene and calm. One alone among them, haggard and overcome, leaned on the arm of the priest, who poured forth all the consolations of religion for the one man who was condemned to live. Then the executioner, like the spectators, knew that Juanito had consented to perform his office for a day. The old Marquis and his wife, Clara and Mariquita, and their two brothers knelt a few paces from the fatal spot. Juanito reached it, guided by the priest. As he stood at the block, the executioner plucked him by the sleeve, and took him aside, probably to give him certain instructions. The confessor so placed the victims that they could not witness the executions, but one and all stood upright and fearless, like Spaniards, as they were.

Clara sprang to her brother's side before the others.

"Juanito," she said to him, "be merciful to my lack of courage. Take me first!"

As she spoke, the footsteps of a man running at full speed echoed from the walls, and Victor appeared upon the scene. Clara was kneeling before the block; her white neck seemed to appeal to the blade to fall. The officer turned faint, but he found strength to rush to her side.

"The general grants you your life if you will consent to marry me," he murmured.

The Spanish girl gave the officer a glance full of proud disdain.

"Now, Juanito!" she said in her deep-toned voice.

Her head fell at Victor's feet. A shudder ran through the Marquesa de Légañès, a convulsive tremor that she could not control, but she gave no other sign of her anguish.

"Is this where I ought to be, dear Juanito? Is it all right?" little Manuel asked his brother.

"Oh, Mariquita, you are weeping!" Juanito said when his sister came.

"Yes," said the girl; "I am thinking of you, poor Juanito; how unhappy you will be when we are gone."

Then the Marquis' tall figure approached. He looked at the block where his children's blood had been shed, turned to the mute and motionless crowd, and said in a loud voice as he stretched out his hands to Juanito.

"Spaniards! I give my son a father's blessing. Now, *Marquis*, strike 'without fear;' thou art 'without reproach.'"

But when his mother came near, leaning on the confessor's arm—"She fed me from her breast!" Juanito cried, in tones that drew a cry of horror from the crowd. The uproarious mirth of the officers over their wine died away before that terrible cry. The Marquesa knew that Juanito's courage was exhausted; at one bound she sprang to the balustrade, leaped forth, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. A cry of admiration broke from the spectators. Juanito swooned.

"General," said an officer, half-drunk by this time, "Marchand has just been telling me something about this execution; I will wager that it was not by your orders."

"Are you forgetting, gentlemen, that in a month's time five hundred families in France will be in mourning, and that we are still in Spain?" cried General G——. "Do you want us to leave our bones here?"

But not a man at the table, not even a subaltern, dared to empty his glass after that speech.

In spite of the respect in which all men hold the Marqués de Légañès, in spite of the title of *El Verdugo* (the executioner) conferred upon him as a patent of nobility by the

King of Spain, the great noble is consumed by a gnawing grief. He lives a retired life, and seldom appears in public. The burden of his heroic crime weighs heavily upon him, and he seems to wait impatiently till the birth of a second son shall release him, and he may go to join the Shades that never cease to haunt him.

PARIS, *October*, 1820.

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FAREWELL.

(*Adieu.*)

To Prince Friedrich von Schwarzenberg

"COME, Deputy of the Centre, come along! We shall have to mend our pace if we mean to sit down to dinner when every one else does, and that's a fact! Hurry up! Jump, Marquis! That's it! Well done! You are bounding over the furrows just like a stag!"

These words were uttered by a sportsman seated much at his ease on the outskirts of the Forêt de l'Isle-Adam; he had just finished a Havana cigar, which he had smoked while he waited for his companion, who had evidently been straying about for some time among the forest undergrowth. Four panting dogs by the speaker's side likewise watched the progress of the personage for whose benefit the remarks were made. To make their sarcastic import fully clear, it should be added that the second sportsman was both short and stout; his ample girth indicated a truly magisterial corpulence, and in consequence his progress across the furrows was by no means easy. He was striding over a vast field of stubble; the dried cornstalks underfoot added not a little to the difficulties of his passage, and, to add to his discomforts, the genial influence of the sun that slanted into his eyes brought great drops of perspiration into his face. The uppermost thought in his mind being a strong desire to keep his balance, he lurched to and fro much like a coach jolted over an atrocious road.

It was one of those September days of almost tropical heat that finishes the work of summer and ripens the grapes. Such

heat forbodes a coming storm; and though as yet there were wide patches of blue between the dark rain-clouds low down on the horizon, pale golden masses were rising and scattering with ominous swiftness from west to east, and drawing a shadowy veil across the sky. The wind was still, save in the upper regions of the air, so that the weight of the atmosphere seemed to compress the steamy heat of the earth into the forest glades. The tall forest trees shut out every breath of air so completely that the little valley across which the sportsman was making his way was as hot as a furnace; the silent forest seemed parched with the fiery heat. Birds and insects were mute; the topmost twigs of the trees swayed with scarcely perceptible motion. Any one who retains some recollection of the summer of 1819 must surely compassionate the plight of the hapless supporter of the ministry who toiled and sweated over the stubble to rejoin his satirical comrade. That gentleman, as he smoked his cigar, had arrived, by a process of calculation based on the altitude of the sun, to the conclusion that it must be about five o'clock.

"Where the devil are we?" asked the stout sportsman. He wiped his brow as he spoke, and propped himself against a tree in the field opposite his companion, feeling quite unequal to clearing the broad ditch that lay between them.

"And you ask that question of *me!*" retorted the other, laughing from his bed of tall brown grasses on the top of the bank. He flung the end of his cigar into the ditch, exclaiming, "I swear by Saint Hubert that no one shall catch *me* risking myself again in a country that I don't know with a magistrate, even if, like you, my dear d'Albon, he happens to be an old schoolfellow."

"Why, Philip, have you really forgotten your own language? You surely must have left your wits behind you in Siberia," said the stouter of the two, with a glance half-comic, half-pathetic at a guide-post distant about a hundred paces from them.

"I understand," replied the one addressed as Philip. He snatched up his rifle, suddenly sprang to his feet, made but one jump of it into the field, and rushed off to the guide-post. "This way, d'Albon, here you are! left about!" he shouted, gesticulating in the direction of the high-road. "To Baillet and l'Isle-Adam!" he went on; "so if we go along here, we shall be sure to come upon the cross-road to Cassan."

"Quite right, colonel," said M. d'Albon, putting the cap with which he had been fanning himself back on his head.

"Then *forward!* highly respected councilor," returned Colonel Philip, whistling to the dogs, that seemed already to obey him rather than the magistrate their master.

"Are you aware, my Lord Marquis, that two leagues yet remain before us?" inquired the malicious soldier. "That village down yonder must be Baillet."

"Great heavens?" cried the Marquis d'Albon. "Go on to Cassan by all means, if you like; but if you do, you will go alone. I prefer to wait here, storm or no storm; you can send a horse for me from the château. You have been making game of me, Sucy. We were to have a nice day's sport by ourselves; we were not to go very far from Cassan, and go over ground that I knew. Pooh! Instead of a day's fun, you have kept me running like a greyhound since four o'clock this morning, and nothing but a cup or two of milk by way of breakfast. Oh! if ever you find yourself in a court of law, I will take care that the day goes against you if you were in the right a hundred times over."

The dejected sportsman sat himself down on one of the stumps at the foot of the guide-post, disencumbered himself of his rifle and empty game-bag, and heaved a prolonged sigh.

"Oh, France, behold thy deputies!" laughed Colonel de Sucy. "Poor old d'Albon; if you had spent six months at the other end of Siberia as I did——"

He broke off, and his eyes sought the sky, as if the story of his troubles was a secret between himself and God.

"Come, march!" he added. "If you once sit down, it is all over with you."

"I can't help it, Philip! It is such an old habit in a magistrate! I am dead beat, upon my honor. If I had only bagged one hare though!"

Two men more different are seldom seen together. The civilian, a man of forty-two, seemed scarcely more than thirty; while the soldier, at thirty years of age, looked to be forty at the least. Both wore the red rosette that proclaimed them to be officers of the Legion of Honor. A few locks of hair, mingled white and black, like a magpie's wing, had strayed from beneath the colonel's cap; while thick, fair curls clustered about the magistrate's temples. The colonel was tall, spare, dried up, but muscular; the lines in his pale face told a tale of vehement passions or of terrible sorrows; but his comrade's jolly countenance beamed with health, and would have done credit to an Epicurean. Both men were deeply sunburnt. Their high gaiters of brown leather carried souvenirs of every ditch and swamp that they crossed that day.

"Come, come," cried M. de Sucy, "forward! One short hour's march, and we shall be at Cassan with a good dinner before us."

"You never were in love, that is positive," returned the councilor, with a comically piteous expression. "You are as inexorable as Article 304 of the Penal Code!"

Philip de Sucy shuddered violently. Deep lines appeared in his broad forehead, his face was overcast like the sky above them; but though his features seemed to contract with the pain of an intolerably bitter memory, no tears came to his eyes. Like all men of strong character, he possessed the power of forcing his emotions down into some inner depth, and, perhaps, like many reserved natures, he shrank from laying bare a wound too deep for any words of human speech, and winced at the thought of ridicule from those who do not care to understand. M. d'Albon was one of those who are

keenly sensitive by nature to the distress of others, who feel at once the pain they have unwittingly given by some blunder. He respected his friend's mood, rose to his feet, forgot his weariness, and followed in silence, thoroughly annoyed with himself for having touched on a wound that seemed not yet healed.

"Some day I will tell you my story," Philip said at last, wringing his friend's hands, while he acknowledged his dumb repentance with a heartrending glance. "To-day, I cannot."

They walked on in silence. As the colonel's distress passed off the councilor's fatigue returned. Instinctively, or rather urged by weariness, his eyes explored the depths of the forest around them; he looked high and low among the trees, and gazed along the avenues, hoping to discover some dwelling where he might ask for hospitality. They reached a place where several roads met; and the councilor, fancying that he saw a thin film of smoke rising through the trees, made a stand and looked sharply about him. He caught a glimpse of the dark green branches of some firs among the other forest trees, and finally, "A house! a house!" he shouted. No sailor could have raised the cry of "Land ahead!" more joyfully than he.

He plunged at once into undergrowth, somewhat of the thickest; and the colonel, who had fallen into deep musings, followed him unheedingly.

"I would rather have an omelette here and home-made bread, and a chair to sit down in, than go further for a sofa, truffles, and Bordeaux wine at Cassan."

This outburst of enthusiasm on the councilor's part was caused by the sight of the whitened wall of a house in the distance, standing out in strong contrast against the brown masses of knotted tree-trunks in the forest.

"Aha! This used to be a priory, I should say," the Marquis d'Albon cried once more, as they stood before a grim old gateway. Through the grating they could see the

house itself standing in the midst of some considerable extent of park land; from the style of the architecture it appeared to have been a monastery once upon a time.

"Those knowing rascals of monks knew how to choose a site!"

This last exclamation was caused by the magistrate's amazement at the romantic hermitage before his eyes. The house had been built on a spot half-way up the hillside on the slope below the village of Nerville, which crowned the summit. A huge circle of great oak trees, hundreds of years old, guarded the solitary place from intrusion. There appeared to be about forty acres of the park. The main building of the monastery faced the south, and stood in a space of green meadow, picturesquely intersected by several tiny clear streams, and by larger sheets of water so disposed as to have a natural effect. Shapely trees with contrasting foliage grew here and there. Grottos had been ingeniously contrived; and broad terraced walks, now in ruin, though the steps were broken and the balustrades eaten through with rust, gave to this sylvan Thebaïd a certain character of its own. The art of man and the picturesqueness of nature had wrought together to produce a charming effect. Human passions surely could not cross that boundary of tall oak trees which shut out the sounds of the outer world, and screened the fierce heat of the sun from this forest sanctuary.

"What neglect!" said M. d'Albon to himself, after the first sense of delight in the melancholy aspect of the ruins in the landscape, which seemed blighted by a curse.

It was like some haunted spot, shunned of men. The twisted ivy stems clambered everywhere, hiding everything away beneath a luxuriant green mantle. Moss and lichens, brown and gray, yellow and red, covered the trees with fantastic patches of color, grew upon the benches in the garden, overran the roof and the walls of the house. The window-sashes were weather-worn and warped with age, the balconies were

dropping to pieces, the terraces in ruins. Here and there the folding shutters hung by a single hinge. The crazy doors would have given way at the first attempt to force an entrance.

Out in the orchard the neglected fruit trees were running to wood, the rambling branches bore no fruit save the glistening mistletoe berries, and tall plants were growing in the garden walks. All this forlornness shed a charm across the picture that wrought on the spectator's mind with an influence like that of some enchanting poem, filling his soul with dreamy fancies. A poet must have lingered there in deep and melancholy musings, marveling at the harmony of this wilderness, where decay had a certain grace of its own.

In a moment a few gleams of sunlight struggled through a rift in the clouds, and a shower of colored light fell over the wild garden. The brown tiles of the roof glowed in the light, the mosses took bright hues, strange shadows played over the grass beneath the trees; the dead autumn tints grew vivid, bright unexpected contrasts were evoked by the light, every leaf stood out sharply in the clear, thin air. Then all at once the sunlight died away, and the landscape that seemed to have spoken grew silent and gloomy again, or, rather, it took gray soft tones like the tenderest hues of autumn dusk.

"It is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty," the councilor said to himself (he had already begun to look at the place from the point of view of an owner of property). "Whom can the place belong to, I wonder. He must be a great fool not to live on such a charming little estate!"

Just at that moment, a woman sprang out from under a walnut tree on the right-hand side of the gateway, and passed before the councilor as noiselessly and swiftly as the shadow of a cloud. This apparition struck him dumb with amazement.

"Hallo, d'Albon, what is the matter?" asked the colonel.

"I am rubbing my eyes to find out whether I am awake or asleep," answered the magistrate, whose countenance was

pressed against the grating in the hope of catching a second glimpse of the ghost.

"In all probability she is under that fig tree," he went on, indicating, for Philip's benefit, some branches that overtopped the wall on the left-hand side of the gateway.

"She? Who?"

"Eh! how should I know?" answered M. d'Albon. "A strange-looking woman sprang up there under my very eyes just now," he added, in a low voice; "she looked to me more like a ghost than a living being. She was so slender, light and shadowy that she might be transparent. Her face was as white as milk, her hair, her eyes, and her dress were black. She gave me a glance as she flitted by. I am not easily frightened, but that cold, stony stare of hers froze the blood in my veins."

"Was she pretty?" inquired Philip.

"I don't know. I saw nothing but those eyes in her head."

"The devil take dinner at Cassan!" exclaimed the colonel; "let us stay here. I am as eager as a boy to see the inside of this queer place. The window-sashes are painted red, do you see? There is a red line round the panels of the doors and the edges of the shutters. It might be the devil's own dwelling; perhaps he took it over when the monks went out. Now, then, let us give chase to the black and white lady; come along!" cried Philip, with forced gaiety.

He had scarcely finished speaking when the two sportsmen heard a cry as if some bird had been taken in a snare. They listened. There was a sound like the murmur of rippling water, as something forced its way through the bushes; but diligently as they lent their ears, there was no footfall on the path, the earth kept the secret of the mysterious woman's passage, if indeed she had moved from her hiding-place.

"This is very strange!" cried Philip.

Following the wall of the park, the two friends reached

before long a forest road leading to the village of Chauvry; they went along this track in the direction of the highway to Paris, and reached another large gateway. Through the railings they had a complete view of the façade of the mysterious house. From this point of view, the dilapidation was still more apparent. Huge cracks had riven the walls of the main body of the house built round three sides of a square. Evidently the place was allowed to fall to ruin; there were holes in the roof, broken slates and tiles lay about below. Fallen fruit from the orchard trees was left to rot on the ground; a cow was grazing over the bowling-green and trampling the flowers in the garden beds; a goat browsed on the green grapes and young vine-shoots on the trellis.

"It is all of a piece," remarked the colonel. "The neglect is in a fashion systematic." He laid his hand on the chain of the bell-pull, but the bell had lost its clapper. The two friends heard no sound save the peculiar grating creak of the rusty spring. A little door in the wall beside the gateway, though ruinous, held good against all their efforts to force it open.

"Oho! all this is growing very interesting," Philip said to his companion.

"If I were not a magistrate," returned M. d'Albon, "I should think that the woman in black is a witch."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the cow came up to the railings and held out her warm damp nose, as if she were glad of human society. Then a woman, if so indescribable a being could be called a woman, sprang up from the bushes, and pulled at the cord about the cow's neck. From beneath the crimson handkerchief about the woman's head, fair matted hair escaped, something as tow hangs about a spindle. She wore no kerchief at the throat. A coarse black-and-gray striped woolen petticoat, too short by several inches, left her legs bare. She might have belonged to some tribe of Redskins in Fenimore Cooper's novels; for her neck,

arms, and ankles looked as if they had been painted brick-red. There was no spark of intelligence in her featureless face; her pale, bluish eyes looked out dull and expressionless from beneath the eyebrows with one or two straggling white hairs on them. Her teeth were prominent and uneven, but white as a dog's.

"Hallo, good woman," called M. de Sucy.

She came slowly up to the railing, and stared at the two sportsmen with a contorted smile painful to see.

"Where are we? What is the name of the house yonder? Whom does it belong to? Who are you? Do you come from hereabouts?"

To these questions, and to a host of others poured out in succession upon her by the two friends, she made no answer save gurgling noises in the throat, more like animal sounds than anything uttered by a human voice.

"Don't you see that she is deaf and dumb?" said M. d'Albon.

"Franciscan monks!" the peasant-woman said at last.

"Ah! she is right. The house looks as though it might once have been a Minorite convent," he went on.

Again they plied the peasant woman with questions, but, like a wayward child, she colored up, fidgeted with her sabot, twisted the rope by which she held the cow that had fallen to grazing again, stared at the sportsmen, and scrutinized every article of clothing upon them; she gibbered, grunted, and clucked, but no articulate word did she utter.

"Your name?" asked Philip, fixing her with his eyes as if he were trying to bewitch the woman.

"Geneviève," she answered, with an empty laugh.

"The cow is the most intelligent creature we have seen so far," exclaimed the magistrate. "I shall fire a shot, that ought to bring somebody out."

D'Albon had just taken up his rifle when the colonel put out a hand to stop him, and pointed out the mysterious

woman who had aroused such lively curiosity in them. She seemed to be absorbed in deep thought, as she went along a green alley some little distance away, so slowly that the friends had time to take a good look at her. She wore a threadbare black satin gown, her long hair curled thickly over her forehead, and fell like a shawl about her shoulders below her waist. Doubtless she was accustomed to the dishevelment of her locks, for she seldom put back the hair on either side of her brows; but when she did so, she shook her head with a sudden jerk that had not to be repeated to shake away the thick veil from her eyes or forehead. In everything that she did, moreover, there was a wonderful certainty in the working of the mechanism, an unerring swiftness and precision, like that of an animal, wellnigh marvelous in a woman.

The two sportsmen were amazed to see her spring up into an apple tree and cling to a bough lightly as a bird. She snatched at the fruit, ate it, and dropped to the ground with the same supple grace that charms us in a squirrel. The elasticity of her limbs took all appearance of awkwardness or effort from her movements. She played about upon the grass, rolling in it as a young child might have done; then, on a sudden, she lay still and stretched out her feet and hands, with the languid natural grace of a kitten dozing in the sun.

There was a threatening growl of thunder far away, and at this she started up on all fours and listened, like a dog who hears a strange footstep. One result of this strange attitude was to separate her thick black hair into two masses, that fell away on either side of her face and left her shoulders bare; the two witnesses of this singular scene wondered at the whiteness of the skin that shone like a meadow daisy, and at the neck that indicated the perfection of the rest of her form.

A wailing cry broke from her; she rose to her feet, and stood upright. Every successive movement was made so lightly, so gracefully, so easily, that she seemed to be no human being, but one of Ossian's maids of the mist. She

went across the grass to one of the pools of water, deftly shook off her shoe, and seemed to enjoy dipping her foot, white as marble, in the spring; doubtless it pleased her to make the circling ripples, and watch them glitter like gems. She knelt down by the brink, and played there like a child, dabbling her long tresses in the water, and flinging them loose again to see the water drip from the ends, like a string of pearls in the sunless light.

"She is mad!" cried the councilor.

A hoarse cry rang through the air; it came from Geneviève, and seemed to be meant for the mysterious woman. She rose to her feet in a moment, flinging back the hair from her face, and then the colonel and d'Albon could see her features distinctly. As soon as she saw the two friends she bounded to the railings with the swiftness of a fawn.

"*Farewell!*" she said in low, musical tones, but they could not discover the least trace of feeling, the least idea in the sweet sounds that they had awaited impatiently.

M. d'Albon admired the long lashes, the thick, dark eyebrows, the dazzling fairness of a skin untinged by any trace of red. Only the delicate blue veins contrasted with that uniform whiteness.

But when the Marquis turned to communicate his surprise at the sight of so strange an apparition, he saw the colonel stretched on the grass like one dead. M. d'Albon fired his gun into the air, shouted for help, and tried to raise his friend. At the sound of the shot, the strange lady, who had stood motionless by the gate, fled away, crying out like a wounded wild creature, circling round and round in the meadow, with every sign of unspeakable terror.

M. d'Albon heard a carriage rolling along the road to l'Isle Adam, and waved his handkerchief to implore help. The carriage immediately came towards the Minorite convent, and M. d'Albon recognized neighbors, M. de and Mme. de Grandville, who hastened to alight and put their carriage at his dis-

posal. Colonel de Sucy inhaled the salts which Mme. de Grandville happened to have with her; he opened his eyes, looked towards the mysterious figure that still fled wailing through the meadow, and a faint cry of horror broke from him; he closed his eyes again, with a dumb gesture of entreaty to his friends to take him away from this scene. M. and Mme. de Grandville begged the councilor to make use of their carriage, adding very obligingly that they themselves would walk.

"Who can the lady be?" inquired the magistrate, looking towards the strange figure.

"People think that she comes from Moulins," answered M. de Grandville. "She is a Comtesse de Vandières; she is said to be mad; but as she has only been here for two months, I cannot vouch for the truth of all this hearsay talk."

M. d'Albon thanked M. and Mme. de Grandville, and they set out for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philip, coming to himself.

"She? who?" asked d'Albon.

"Stéphanie—— Ah! dead and yet living still; still alive, but her mind is gone! I thought the sight would kill me."

The prudent magistrate, recognizing the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, refrained from asking questions or exciting him further, and grew impatient of the length of the way to the château, for the change wrought in the colonel's face alarmed him. He feared lest the Countess' terrible disease had communicated itself to Philip's brain. When they reached the avenue at l'Isle-Adam d'Albon sent the servant for the local doctor, so that the colonel had scarcely been laid in bed before the surgeon was beside him.

"If Monsieur le Colonel had not been fasting, the shock must have killed him," pronounced the leech. "He was overtired, and that saved him," and with a few directions as to the patient's treatment, he went to prepare a composing

draught himself. M. de Sucy was better the next morning, but the doctor had insisted on sitting up all night with him.

"I confess, Monsieur le Marquis," the surgeon said, "that I feared for the brain. M. de Sucy has had some very violent shock; he is a man of strong passions, but with his temperament, the first shock decides everything. He will very likely be out of danger to-morrow."

The doctor was perfectly right. The next day the patient was allowed to see his friend.

"I want you to do something for me, dear d'Albon," Philip said, grasping his friend's hand. "Hasten at once to the Minorite convent, find out everything about the lady whom we saw there, and come back as soon as you can; I shall count the minutes till I see you again."

M. d'Albon called for his horse, and galloped over to the old monastery. When he reached the gateway he found some one standing there, a tall, spare man with a kindly face, who answered in the affirmative when he was asked if he lived in the ruined house. M. d'Albon explained his errand.

"Why, then, it must have been you, sir, who fired that unlucky shot! You all but killed my poor invalid."

"Eh! I fired into the air!"

"If you had actually hit Madame la Comtesse, you would have done less harm to her."

"Well, well, then, we can neither of us complain, for the sight of the Countess all but killed my friend, M. de Sucy."

"The Baron de Sucy, is it possible?" cried the other, clasping his hands. "Has he been in Russia? was he in the Beresina?"

"Yes," answered d'Albon. "He was taken prisoner by the Cossacks and sent to Siberia. He has not been back in this country a twelvemonth."

"Come in, monsieur," said the other, and he led the way to a drawing-room on the ground-floor. Everything in the room showed signs of capricious destruction.

Valuable china jars lay in fragments on either side of a clock beneath a glass shade, which had escaped. The silk hangings about the windows were torn to rags, while the muslin curtains were untouched.

"You see about you the havoc wrought by a charming being to whom I have dedicated my life. She is my niece; and though medical science is powerless in her case, I hope to restore her to reason, though the method which I am trying is, unluckily, only possible to the wealthy."

Then, like all who live much alone and daily bear the burden of a heavy trouble, he fell to talk with the magistrate. This is the story that he told, set in order, and with the many digressions made by both teller and hearer omitted.

When, at nine o'clock at night, on the 28th of November, 1812, Marshal Victor abandoned the heights of Studzianka, which he had held through the day, he left a thousand men behind with instructions to protect, till the last possible moment, the two pontoon bridges over the Beresina that still held good. The rearguard was to save if possible an appalling number of stragglers, so numbed with the cold that they obstinately refused to leave the baggage-wagons. The heroism of the generous band was doomed to fail; for, unluckily, the men who poured down to the eastern bank of the Beresina found carriages, caissons, and all kinds of property which the army had been forced to abandon during its passage on the 27th and 28th days of November. The poor, half-frozen wretches, sunk almost to the level of brutes, finding such unhoped-for riches, bivouacked in the deserted space, laid hands on the military stores, improvised huts out of the material, lighted fires with anything that would burn, cut up the carcasses of the horses for food, tore out the linings of the carriages, wrapped themselves in them, and lay down to sleep, instead of crossing the Beresina in peace under cover of night—the Beresina that even then had proved, by an incredible fatality,

so disastrous to the army. Such apathy on the part of the poor fellows can only be understood by those who remember tramping across those vast deserts of snow, with nothing to quench their thirst but snow, snow for their bed, snow as far as the horizon on every side, and no food but snow, a little frozen beetroot, horseflesh, or a handful of meal.

The miserable creatures were dropping down, overcome by hunger, thirst, weariness, and sleep, when they reached the shores of the Beresina and found fuel and fire and victuals, countless wagons and tents, a whole improvised town, in short. The whole village of Studzianka had been removed piecemeal from the heights to the plain, and the very perils and miseries of this dangerous and doleful habitation smiled invitingly to the wayfarers, who beheld no prospect beyond it but the awful Russian deserts. A huge hospice, in short, was erected for twenty hours of existence. Only one thought—the thought of rest—appealed to men weary of life or rejoicing in unlooked-for comfort.

They lay right in the line of fire from the cannon of the Russian left; but to that vast mass of human creatures, a patch upon the snow, sometimes dark, sometimes breaking into flame, the indefatigable grapeshot was but one discomfort the more. For them it was only a storm, and they paid the less attention to the bolts that fell among them because there were none to strike down there save dying men, the wounded, or perhaps the dead. Stragglers came up in little bands at every moment. These walking corpses instantly separated, and wandered begging from fire to fire; and meeting, for the most part, with refusals, banded themselves together again, and took by force what they could not otherwise obtain. They were deaf to the voices of their officers prophesying death on the morrow, and spent the energy required to cross the swamp in building shelters for the night and preparing a meal that often proved fatal. The coming death no longer seemed an evil, for it gave them an hour of

slumber before it came. Hunger and thirst and cold—these were evils, but not death.

At last wood and fuel and canvas and shelters failed, and hideous brawls began between destitute late-comers and the rich already in possession of a lodging. The weaker were driven away, until a few last fugitives before the Russian advance were obliged to make their bed in the snow, and lay down to rise no more.

Little by little the mass of half-dead humanity became so dense, so deaf, so torpid—or perhaps it should be said so happy—that Marshal Victor, their heroic defender against twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, was actually compelled to cut his way by force through this forest of men, so as to cross the Beresina with the five thousand heroes whom he was leading to the Emperor. The miserable creatures preferred to be trampled and crushed to death rather than stir from their places, and died without a sound, smiling at the dead ashes of their fires, forgetful of France.

Not before ten o'clock that night did the Duc de Belluno reach the other side of the river. Before committing his men to the pontoon bridges that led to Zembin, he left the fate of the rearguard at Studzianka in Eblé's hands, and to Eblé the survivors of the calamities of the Beresina owed their lives.

About midnight, the great general, followed by a courageous officer, came out of his little hut by the bridge and gazed at the spectacle of this camp between the bank of the Beresina and the Borizof road to Studzianka. The thunder of the Russian cannonade had ceased. Here and there faces that had nothing human about them were lighted up by countless fires that seemed to grow pale in the glare of the snowfields, and to give no light. Nearly thirty thousand wretches, belonging to every nation that Napoleon had hurled upon Russia, lay there hazarding their lives with the indifference of brute beasts.

"We have all these to save," the general said to his sub-

ordinate. "To-morrow morning the Russians will be in Studzianka. The moment they come up we shall have to set fire to the bridge; so pluck up heart, my boy! Make your way out and up yonder through them, and tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his post and cut his way through to the bridge. As soon as you have seen him set out, follow him down, take some able-bodied men, and set fire to the tents, wagons, caissons, carriages, anything and everything, without pity, and drive these fellows on to the bridge. Compel everything that walks on two legs to take refuge on the other bank. We must set fire to the camp; it is our last resource. If Berthier had let me burn those d——d wagons sooner, no lives need have been lost in the river except my poor pontooneers, my fifty heroes, who saved the army, and will be forgotten."

The general passed his hand over his forehead and said no more. He felt that Poland would be his tomb, and foresaw that afterwards no voice would be raised to speak for the noble fellows who had plunged into the stream—into the waters of the Beresina!—to drive in the piles for the bridges. And, indeed, only one of them is living now, or, to be more accurate, starving, utterly forgotten, in a country village! The brave officer had scarcely gone a hundred paces towards Studzianka, when General Eblé roused some of his patient pontooneers, and began his work of mercy by setting fire to the camp on the side nearest the bridge, so compelling the sleepers to rise and cross the Beresina. Meanwhile the young aide-de-camp, not without difficulty, reached the one wooden house yet left standing in Studzianka.

"So the box is pretty full, is it, messmate?" he said to a man whom he found outside.

"You will be a knowing fellow if you manage to get inside," the officer returned, without turning round or stopping his occupation of hacking at the woodwork of the house with his sabre.

"Philip, is that you?" cried the aide-de-camp, recognizing the voice of one of his friends.

"Yes. Aha! is it you, old fellow?" returned M. de Sucy, looking around at the aide-de-camp, who like himself was not more than twenty-three years old. "I fancied you were on the other side of this confounded river. Do you come to bring us sweetmeats for dessert! You will get a warm welcome," he added, as he tore away a strip of bark from the wood and gave it to his horse by way of fodder.

"I am looking for your commandant. General Eblé has sent me to tell him to file off to Zembin. You have only just time to cut your way through that mass of dead men; as soon as you get through, I am going to set fire to the place to make them move——"

"You almost make me feel warm! Your news has put me in a fever; I have two friends to bring through. Ah! but for these marmots, I should have been dead before now, old fellow. On their account I am taking care of my horse instead of eating him. But have you a crust about you, for pity's sake? It is thirty hours since I have stowed any victuals. I have been fighting like a madman to keep up a little warmth in my body and what courage I have left."

"Poor Philip! I have nothing—not a scrap! But is your general in there?"

"Don't attempt to go in. The barn is full of our wounded. Go up a bit higher, and you will see a sort of pigsty to the right—that is where the general is. Good-bye, my dear fellow. If ever we meet again in a quadrille in a ballroom in Paris——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the treachery of the northeast wind that whistled about them froze Major Philips' lips, and the aide-de-camp kept moving for fear of being frost-bitten. Silence soon prevailed, scarcely broken by the groans of the wounded in the barn, or the stifled sounds made by M. de Sucy's horse crunching the frozen bark with famished

eagerness. Philip thrust his sabre into the sheath, caught at the bridle of the precious animal that he had managed to keep for so long, and drew her away from the miserable fodder that she was bolting with apparent relish.

"Come along, Bichette! come along! It lies with you now, my beauty, to save Stéphanie's life. There, wait a little longer, and they will let us lie down and die, no doubt;" and Philip, wrapped in a pelisse, to which doubtless he owed his life and energies, began to run, stamping his feet on the frozen snow to keep them warm. He was scarcely five hundred paces away before he saw a great fire blazing on the spot where he had left his carriage that morning with an old soldier to guard it. A dreadful misgiving seized upon him. Many a man under the influence of a powerful feeling during the Retreat summoned up energy for his friend's sake when he would not have exerted himself to save his own life; so it was with Philip. He soon neared a hollow, where he had left a carriage sheltered from the cannonade, a carriage that held a young woman, his playmate in childhood, dearer to him than any one else on earth.

Some thirty stragglers were sitting round a tremendous blaze, which they kept up with logs of wood, planks, wrenched from the floors of the caissons, and wheels, and panels, from carriage bodies. These had been, doubtless, among the last to join the sea of fires, huts, and human faces that filled the great furrow in the land between Studzianka and the fatal river, a restless living sea of almost imperceptibly moving figures, that sent up a smothered hum of sound blended with frightful shrieks. It seemed that hunger and despair had driven these forlorn creatures to take forcible possession of the carriage, for the old general and his young wife, whom they had found warmly wrapped in pelisses and traveling cloaks, were now crouching on the earth beside the fire, and one of the carriage doors was broken.

As soon as the group of stragglers round the fire heard the

footfall of the major's horse, a frenzied yell of hunger went up from them. "A horse!" they cried. "A horse!"

All the voices went up as one voice.

"Back! back! Lookout!" shouted two or three of them, leveling their muskets at the animal.

"I will pitch you neck and crop into your fire, you blackguards!" cried Philip springing in front of the mare. "There are dead horses lying up yonder; go and look for them!"

"What a rum customer the officer is! Once, twice, will you get out of the way?" returned a giant grenadier. "You won't? All right then, just as you please."

A woman's shriek rang out above the report. Luckily, none of the bullets hit Philip; but poor Bichette lay in the agony of death. Three of the men came up and put an end to her with thrusts of the bayonet.

"Cannibals! leave me the rug and my pistols," cried Philip in desperation.

"Oh! the pistols if you like; but as for the rug, there is a fellow yonder who has had nothing to 'wet his whistle' these two days, and is shivering in his coat of cobwebs, and that's our general."

Philip looked up and saw a man with worn-out shoes and a dozen rents in his trousers; the only covering for his head was a ragged foraging cap, white with rime. He said no more after that, but snatched up his pistols.

Five of the men dragged the mare to the fire, and began to cut up the carcass as dexterously as any journeymen butchers in Paris. The scraps of meat were distributed and flung upon the coals, and the whole process was magically swift. Philip went over to the woman who had given the cry of terror when she recognized his danger, and sat down by her side. She sat motionless upon a cushion taken from the carriage, warming herself at the blaze; she said no word, and gazed at him without a smile. He saw beside her the soldier whom he had left mounting guard over the carriage; the poor fellow had

been wounded; he had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to surrender to the stragglers who had set upon him, and, like a dog who defends his master's dinner till the last moment, he had taken his share of the spoil, and had made a sort of cloak for himself out of a sheet. At that particular moment he was busy toasting a piece of horseflesh, and in his face the major saw a gleeful anticipation of the coming feast.

The Comte de Vandières, who seemed to have grown quite childish in the last few days, sat on a cushion close to his wife, and stared into the fire. He was only just beginning to shake off his torpor under the influence of the warmth. He had been no more affected by Philip's arrival and danger than by the fight and subsequent pillage of his traveling carriage.

At first Sucy caught the young Countess' hand in his, trying to express his affection for her, and the pain that it gave him to see her reduced like this to the last extremity of misery; but he said nothing as he sat by her side on the thawing heap of snow, he gave himself up to the pleasure of the sensation of warmth, forgetful of danger, forgetful of all things else in the world. In spite of himself his face expanded with an almost fatuous expression of satisfaction, and he waited impatiently till the scrap of horseflesh that had fallen to his soldier's share should be cooked. The smell of the charred flesh stimulated his hunger. Hunger clamored within him and silenced his heart, his courage, and his love. He coolly looked round on the results of the spoliation of his carriage. Not a man seated round the fire but had shared the booty, the rugs, cushions, pelisses, dresses—articles of clothing that belonged to the Count and Countess or to himself. Philip turned to see if anything worth taking was left in the berline. He saw by the light of the flames, gold, and diamonds, and silver lying scattered about; no one had cared to appropriate the least particle. There was something hideous in the silence among those human creatures round the fire;

none of them spoke, none of them stirred, save to do such things as each considered necessary for his own comfort.

It was a grotesque misery. The men's faces were warped and disfigured with the cold, and plastered over with a layer of mud; you could see the thickness of the mask by the channel traced down their cheeks by the tears that ran from their eyes, and their long slovenly-kept beards added to the hideousness of their appearance. Some were wrapped round in women's shawls, others in horse-cloths, dirty blankets, rags stiffened with melting hoar-frost; here and there a man wore a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other; in fact, there was not one of them but wore some ludicrously odd costume. But the men themselves with such matter for jest about them were gloomy and taciturn.

The silence was unbroken save by the crackling of the wood, the roaring of the flames, the far-off hum of the camp, and the sound of sabres hacking at the carcass of the mare. Some of the hungriest of the men were still cutting tit-bits for themselves. A few miserable creatures, more weary than the others, slept outright; and if they happened to roll into the fire, no one pulled them back. With cut-and-dried logic their fellows argued that if they were not dead, a scorching ought to be sufficient warning to quit and seek out more comfortable quarters. If the poor wretch woke to find himself on fire, he was burned to death, and nobody pitied him. Here and there the men exchanged glances, as if to excuse their indifference by the carelessness of the rest; the thing happened twice under the young Countess' eyes, and she uttered no sound. When all the scraps of horseflesh had been broiled upon the coals, they were devoured with a ravenous greediness that would have been disgusting in wild beasts.

"And now we have seen thirty infantry-men on one horse for the first time in our lives!" cried the grenadier who had shot the mare, the one solitary joke that sustained the Frenchman's reputation for wit.

Before long the poor fellows huddled themselves up in their clothes, and lay down on planks of timber, on anything but the bare snow, and slept—heedless of the morrow. Major de Sucy having warmed himself and satisfied his hunger, fought in vain against the drowsiness that weighed upon his eyes. During this brief struggle he gazed at the sleeping girl who had turned her face to the fire, so that he could see her closed eyelids and part of her forehead. She was wrapped round in a furred pelisse and a coarse horseman's cloak, her head lay on a blood-stained cushion; a tall astrakhan cap tied over her head by a handkerchief knotted under the chin protected her face as much as possible from the cold, and she had tucked up her feet in the cloak. As she lay curled up in this fashion, she bore no likeness to any creature.

Was this the lowest of camp-followers? Was this the charming woman, the pride of her lover's heart, the queen of many a Parisian ballroom? Alas! even for the eyes of this most devoted friend, there was no discernible trace of womanhood in that bundle of rags and linen, and the cold was mightier than the love in a woman's heart.

Then for the major the husband and wife came to be like two distant dots seen through the thick veil that the most irresistible kind of slumber spread over his eyes. It all seemed to be part of a dream—the leaping flames, the recumbent figures, the awful cold that lay in wait for them three paces away from the warmth of the fire that glowed for a little while. One thought that could not be stifled haunted Philip—"If I go to sleep, we shall all die; I will not sleep," he said to himself.

He slept. After an hour's slumber M. de Sucy was awakened by a hideous uproar and the sound of an explosion. The remembrances of his duty, of the danger of his beloved, rushed upon his mind with a sudden shock. He uttered a cry like the growl of a wild beast. He and his servant stood upright above the rest. They saw a sea of fire in the dark-

ness, and against it moving masses of human figures. Flames were devouring the huts and tents. Despairing shrieks and yelling cries reached their ears; they saw thousands upon thousands of wild and desperate faces; and through this inferno a column of soldiers was cutting its way to the bridge, between two hedges of dead bodies.

"Our rearguard is in full retreat," cried the major. "There is no hope left!"

"I have spared your traveling carriage, Philip," said a friendly voice.

Sucy turned and saw the young aide-de-camp by the light of the flames.

"Oh, it is all over with us," he answered. "They have eaten my horse. And how am I to make this sleepy general and his wife stir a step?"

"Take a brand, Philip, and threaten them."

"Threaten the Countess?——"

"Good-bye," cried the aide-de-camp; "I have only just time to get across that unlucky river, and go I must, there is my mother in France!—— What a night! This herd of wretches would rather lie here in the snow, and most of them would sooner be buried alive than get up—— It is four o'clock, Philip! In two hours the Russians will begin to move, and you will see the Beresina covered with corpses a second time, I can tell you. You haven't a horse, and you cannot carry the Countess, so come along with me," he went on, taking his friend by the arm.

"My dear fellow, how am I to leave Stéphanie!"

Major de Sucy grasped the Countess, set her on her feet, and shook her roughly; he was in despair. He compelled her to wake, and she stared at him with dull fixed eyes.

"Stéphanie, we must go, or we shall die here!"

For all answer the Countess tried to sink down again and sleep on the earth. The aide-de-camp snatched a brand from the fire and shook it in her face.

"We must save her in spite of herself," cried Philip, and he carried her in his arms to the carriage. He came back to entreat his friend to help him, and the two young men took the old general and put him beside his wife, without knowing whether he were alive or dead. The major rolled the men over as they crouched on the earth, took away the plundered clothing, and heaped it upon the husband and wife, then he flung some of the broiled fragments of horseflesh into a corner of the carriage.

"Now, what do you mean to do?" asked his friend, the aide-de-camp.

"Drag them along!" answered Sucy.

"You are mad!"

"You are right!" exclaimed Philip, folding his arms on his breast.

Suddenly a desperate plan occurred to him.

"Look you here!" he said, grasping his sentinel by the unwounded arm, "I leave her in your care for one hour. Bear in mind that you must die sooner than let any one, no matter whom, come near the carriage!"

The major seized a handful of the lady's diamonds, drew his sabre, and violently battered those who seemed to him to be the bravest among the sleepers. By this means he succeeded in rousing the gigantic grenadier and a couple of men whose rank and regiment were undiscoverable.

"It is all up with us!" he cried.

"Of course it is," returned the grenadier; "but that is all one to me."

"Very well then, if die you must, isn't it better to sell your life for a pretty woman, and stand a chance of going back to France again?"

"I would rather go to sleep," said one of the men, dropping down into the snow; "and if you worry me again, major, I shall stick my toasting-iron into your belly!"

"What is it all about, sir?" asked the grenadier. "The

man's drunk. He is a Parisian, and likes to lie in the lap of luxury."

"You shall have these, good fellow," said the major, holding out a river of diamonds, "if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are not ten minutes away; they have horses; we will march up to the nearest battery and carry off two stout ones."

"How about the sentinels, major?"

"One of us three——" he began; then he turned from the soldier and looked at the aide-de-camp. "You are coming, aren't you, Hippolyte?"

Hippolyte nodded assent.

"One of us," the major went on, "will look after the sentry. Besides, perhaps those blessed Russians are also fast asleep."

"All right, major; you are a good sort! But will you take me in your carriage?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if you don't leave your bones up yonder. If I come to grief, promise me, you two, that you will do everything in your power to save the Countess."

"All right," said the grenadier.

They set out for the Russian lines, taking the direction of the batteries that had so cruelly raked the mass of miserable creatures huddled together by the river bank. A few minutes later the hoofs of two galloping horses rang on the frozen snow, and the awakened battery fired a volley that passed over the heads of the sleepers; the hoof-beats rattled so fast on the iron ground that they sounded like the hammering in a smithy. The generous aide-de-camp had fallen; the stalwart grenadier had come off safe and sound; and Philip himself had received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder while defending his friend. Notwithstanding his wound, he clung to his horse's mane, and gripped him with his knees so tightly that the animal was held as in a vice.

"God be praised!" cried the major, when he saw his

soldier still on the spot, and the carriage standing where he had left it.

"If you do the right thing by me, sir, you will get me the cross for this. We have treated them to a sword dance to a pretty tune from the rifle, eh?"

"We have done nothing yet! Let us put the horses in. Take hold of these cords."

"They are not long enough."

"All right, grenadier, just go and overhaul those fellows sleeping there; take their shawls, sheets, anything——"

"I say! the rascal is dead," cried the grenadier, as he plundered the first man who came to hand. "Why, they are all dead! how queer!"

"All of them?"

"Yes, every one. It looks as though horseflesh on snow was indigestible."

Philip shuddered at the words. The night had grown twice as cold as before.

"Great heaven! to lose her when I have saved her life a score of times already."

He shook the Countess. "Stéphanie! Stéphanie!" he cried.

She opened her eyes.

"We are saved, madame!"

"Saved!" she echoed, and fell back again.

The horses were harnessed after a fashion at last. The major held his sabre in his unwounded hand, took the reins in the other, saw to his pistols, and sprang on one of the horses, while the grenadier mounted the other. The old sentinel had been pushed into the carriage, and lay across the knees of the general and the Countess; his feet were frozen. Urged on by blows from the flat of the sabre, the horses dragged the carriage at a mad gallop down to the plain, where endless difficulties awaited them. Before long it became almost impossible to advance without crushing sleeping men,

women, and even children at every step, all of whom declined to stir when the grenadier awakened them. In vain M. de Sucy looked for the track that the rearguard had cut through this dense crowd of human beings; there was no more sign of their passage than of the wake of a ship in the sea. The horses could only move at a foot-pace, and were stopped most frequently by soldiers, who threatened to kill them.

"Do you mean to get there?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if it costs every drop of blood in my body! if it costs the whole world!" the major answered.

"Forward, then!—— You can't have the omelette without breaking eggs." And the grenadier of the Garde urged on the horses over the prostrate bodies and upset the bivouacs; the blood-stained wheels ploughing that field of faces left a double furrow of dead. But in justice it should be said that he never ceased to thunder out his warning cry, "Carrion! lookout!"

"Poor wretches!" exclaimed the major.

"Bah! That way, or the cold, or the cannon!" said the grenadier, goading on the horses with the point of his sword.

Then came the catastrophe, which must have happened sooner but for miraculous good fortune; the carriage was overturned, and all further progress was stopped at once.

"I expected as much!" exclaimed the imperturable grenadier. "Oho! he is dead!" he added, looking at his comrade.

"Poor Laurent!" said the major.

"Laurent! Wasn't he in the Fifth Chasseurs?"

"Yes."

"My own cousin. Pshaw! this beastly life is not so pleasant that one need be sorry for him as things go."

But all this time the carriage lay overturned, and the horses were only released after great and irreparable loss of time. The shock had been so violent that the Countess had been awakened by it, and the subsequent commotion aroused her from her stupor. She shook off the rugs and rose.

"Where are we, Philip?" she asked in musical tones, as she looked about her.

"About five hundred paces from the bridge. We are just about to cross the Beresina. When we are on the other side, Stéphanie, I will not tease you any more; I will let you go to sleep; we shall be in safety, we can go on to Wilna in peace. God grant that you may never know what your life has cost!"

"You are wounded!"

"A mere trifle."

The hour of doom had come. The Russian cannon announced the day. The Russians were in possession of Studzianka, and thence were raking the plain with grapeshot; and by the first dim light of the dawn the major saw two columns moving and forming above on the heights. Then a cry of horror went up from the crowd, and in a moment every one sprang to his feet. Each instinctively felt his danger, and all made a rush for the bridge, surging toward it like a wave.

Then the Russians came down upon them, swift as a conflagration. Men, women, children, and horses all crowded towards the river. Luckily for the major and the Countess, they were still at some distance from the bank. General Eblé had just set fire to the bridge on the other side; but in spite of all the warnings given to those who rushed towards the chance of salvation, not one among them could or would draw back. The overladen bridge gave way, and not only so, the impetus of the frantic living wave towards that fatal bank was such that a dense crowd of human beings was thrust into the water as if by an avalanche. The sound of a single human cry could not be distinguished; there was a dull crash as if an enormous stone had fallen into the water, and the Beresina was covered with corpses.

The violent recoil of those in front, striving to escape this death, brought them into hideous collision with those behind them, who were pressing towards the bank, and many were suffocated and crushed. The Comte and Comtesse de Van-

dières owed their lives to the carriage. The horses that had trampled and crushed so many dying men were crushed and trampled to death in their turn by the human maelstrom which eddied from the bank. Sheer physical strength saved the major and the grenadier. They killed others in self-defense. That wild sea of human faces and living bodies, surging to and fro as by one impulse, left the bank of the Beresina clear for a few moments. The multitude had hurled themselves back on the plain. Some few men sprang down from the banks towards the river, not so much with any hope of reaching the opposite shore, which for them meant France, as from dread of the wastes of Siberia. For some bold spirits despair became a panoply. An officer leaped from hummock to hummock of ice, and reached the other shore; one of the soldiers scrambled over miraculously on the piles of dead bodies and drift ice. But the immense multitude left behind saw at last that the Russians would not slaughter twenty thousand unarmed men, too numb with the cold to attempt to resist them, and each awaited his fate with dreadful apathy. By this time the major and his grenadier, the old general and his wife were left to themselves not very far from the place where the bridge had been. All four stood dry-eyed and silent among the heaps of dead. A few able-bodied men and one or two officers, who had recovered all their energies at this crisis, gathered about them. The group was sufficiently large; there were about fifty men all told. A couple of hundred paces from them stood the wreck of the artillery bridge, which had broken down the day before; the major saw this, and "Let us make a raft!" he cried.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the whole group hurried to the ruins of the bridge. A crowd of men began to pick up iron clamps and to hunt for planks and ropes —for all the materials for a raft, in short. A score of armed men and officers, under command of the major, stood on guard to protect the workers from any desperate attempt on

the part of the multitude if they should guess their design. The longing for freedom, which inspires prisoners to accomplish impossibilities, cannot be compared with the hope which lent energy at that moment to these forlorn Frenchmen.

"The Russians are upon us! Here are the Russians!" the guard shouted to the workers.

The timbers creaked, the raft grew larger, stronger, and more substantial. Generals, colonels, and common soldiers all alike bent beneath the weight of wagon-wheels, chains, coils of rope, and planks of timber; it was a modern realization of the building of Noah's ark. The young Countess, sitting by her husband's side, looked on, regretful that she could do nothing to aid the workers, though she helped to knot the lengths of rope together.

At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it out into the river, while ten of the soldiers held the ropes that must keep it moored to the shore. The moment that they saw their handiwork floating on the Beresina, they sprang down on to it from the bank with callous selfishness. The major, dreading the frenzy of the first rush, held back Stéphanie and the general; but a shudder ran through him when he saw the landing place black with people, and men crowding down like play-goers into the pit of a theatre.

"It was I who thought of the raft, you savages!" he cried. "I have saved your lives, and you will not make room for me!"

A confused murmur was the only answer. The men at the edge took up stout poles, thrust them against the bank with all their might, so as to shove the raft out and gain an impetus at its starting upon a journey across a sea of floating ice and dead bodies towards the other shore.

"God's thunder! I will knock some of you off into the water if you don't make room for the major and his two companions," shouted the grenadier. He raised his sabre threateningly, delayed the departure, and made the men stand closer together, in spite of threatening yells.

"I shall fall in!—— I shall go overboard!——" the fellows shouted.

"Let us start! Put off!"

The major gazed with tearless eyes at the woman he loved; an impulse of sublime resignation raised her eyes to heaven.

"To die with you!" she said.

In the situation of the folk upon the raft there was a certain comic element. They might utter hideous yells, but not one of them dared to oppose the grenadier, for they were packed together so tightly that if one man were knocked down, the whole raft might capsize. At this delicate crisis, a captain tried to rid himself of one of his neighbors; the man saw the hostile intention of his officer, collared him, and pitched him overboard. "Aha! The duck has a mind to drink—— Over with you! There is room for two now!" he shouted. "Quick, major! throw your little woman over, and come! Never mind that old dotard; he will drop off to-morrow!"

"Be quick!" cried a voice, made up of a hundred voices.

"Come, major! Those fellows are making a fuss, and well they may!"

The Comte de Vandières flung off his ragged blankets, and stood before them in his general's uniform.

"Let us save the Count," said Philip.

Stéphanie grasped his hand tightly in hers, flung her arms about, and clasped him close in an agonized embrace.

"Farewell!" she said.

Then each knew the other's thoughts. The Comte de Vandières recovered his energies and presence of mind sufficiently to jump on to the raft, whither Stéphanie followed him after one last look at Philip.

"Major, won't you take my place? I do not care a straw for life; I have neither wife, nor child, nor mother belonging to me——"

"I give them into your charge," cried the major, indicating the Count and his wife.

"Be easy; I will take as much care of them as of the apple of my eye."

Philip stood stock-still on the bank. The raft sped so violently towards the opposite shore that it ran aground with a violent shock to all on board. The Count, standing on the very edge, was shaken into the stream; and as he fell, a mass of ice swept by and struck off his head, and sent it flying like a ball.

"Hey! major!" shouted the grenadier.

"Farewell!" a woman's voice called aloud.

An icy shiver of dread ran through Philip de Sucy, and he dropped down where he stood, overcome with cold and sorrow and weariness.

"My poor niece went out of her mind," the doctor added after a brief pause. "Ah! monsieur," he went on, grasping M. d'Albon's hand, "what a fearful life for the poor little thing, so young, so delicate! An unheard-of misfortune separated her from that grenadier of the Garde (Fleuriot by name), and for two years she was dragged on after the army, the laughing-stock of a rabble of outcasts. She went barefoot, I heard, ill-clad, neglected, and starved for months at a time; sometimes confined in a hospital, sometimes living like a hunted animal. God alone knows all the misery which she endured, and yet she lives. She was shut up in a mad-house in a little German town, while her relations, believing her to be dead, were dividing her property here in France.

"In 1816 the grenadier Fleuriot recognized her in an inn in Strasbourg. She had just managed to escape from captivity. Some peasants told him that the Countess had lived for a whole month in a forest, and how that they had tracked her and tried to catch her without success.

"I was at that time not many leagues from Strasbourg; and hearing the talk about this girl in the woods, I wished to verify the strange facts that had given rise to absurd stories. What

was my feeling when I beheld the Countess? Fleuriot told me all that he knew of the piteous story. I took the poor fellow with my niece into Auvergne, and there I had the misfortune to lose him. He had some ascendency over Mme. de Vandières. He alone succeeded in persuading her to wear clothes; and in those days her one word of human speech—*Farewell*—she seldom uttered. Fleuriot set himself to the task of awakening certain associations; but there he failed completely; he drew that one sorrowful word from her a little more frequently, that was all. But the old grenadier could amuse her, and devoted himself to playing with her, and through him I hoped; but——" here Stéphanie's uncle broke off. After a moment he went on again.

"Here she has found another creature with whom she seems to have an understanding—an idiot peasant girl, who once, in spite of her plainness and imbecility, fell in love with a mason. The mason thought of marrying her because she had a little bit of land, and for a whole year poor Geneviève was the happiest of living creatures. She dressed in her best, and danced on Sundays with Dallot; she understood love; there was room for love in her heart and brain. But Dallot thought better of it. He found another girl who had all her senses and rather more land than Geneviève, and he forsook Geneviève for her. Then the poor thing lost the little intelligence that love had developed in her; she can do nothing now but cut grass and look after the cattle. My niece and the poor girl are in some sort bound to each other by the invisible chain of their common destiny, and by their madness due to the same cause. Just come here a moment; look!" and Stéphanie's uncle led the Marquis d'Albon to the window.

There, in fact, the magistrate beheld the pretty Countess sitting on the ground at Geneviève's knee, while the peasant girl was wholly absorbed in combing out Stéphanie's long, black hair with a huge comb. The Countess submitted herself to this, uttering low smothered cries that expressed her

enjoyment of the sensation of physical comfort. A shudder ran through M. d'Albon as he saw her attitude of languid abandonment, the animal supineness that revealed an utter lack of intelligence.

"Oh! Philip, Philip!" he cried, "past troubles are as nothing. Is it quite hopeless?" he asked.

The doctor raised his eyes to heaven.

"Good-bye, monsieur," said M. d'Albon, pressing the old man's hand. "My friend is expecting me; you will see him here before very long."

"Then it is Stéphanie herself?" cried Sucy when the Marquis had spoken the first few words. "Ah! until now I did not feel sure!" he added. Tears filled the dark eyes that were wont to wear a stern expression.

"Yes; she is the Comtesse de Vandières," his friend replied.

The colonel started up and hurriedly began to dress.

"Why, Philip!" cried the horrified magistrate. "Are you going mad?"

"I am quite well now," said the colonel simply. "This news has soothed all my bitterest grief; what pain could hurt me while I think of Stéphanie? I am going over to the Minorite convent, to see her and to speak to her, to restore her to health again. She is free; ah, surely, surely, happiness will smile on us, or there is no Providence above. How can you think that she could hear my voice, poor Stéphanie, and not recover her reason?"

"She has seen you once already, and she did not recognize you," the magistrate answered gently, trying to suggest some wholesome fears to his friend, whose hopes were visibly too high.

The colonel shuddered, but he began to smile again, with a slight involuntary gesture of incredulity. Nobody ventured to oppose his plans, and a few hours later he had taken up his abode in the old priory, to be near the doctor and the Comtesse de Vandières.

"Where is she?" he cried at once.

"Hush!" answered M. Fanjat, Stéphanie's uncle. "She is sleeping. Stay; here she is."

Philip saw the poor distraught sleeper crouching on a stone bench in the sun. Her thick hair, straggling over her face, screened it from the glare and heat; her arms dropped languidly to the earth; she lay at ease as gracefully as a fawn, her feet tucked up beneath her; her bosom rose and fell with her even breathing; there was the same transparent whiteness as of porcelain in her skin and complexion that we so often admire in children's faces. Geneviève sat there motionless, holding a spray that Stéphanie doubtless had brought down from the top of one of the tallest poplars; the idiot girl was waving the green branch above her, driving away the flies from her sleeping companion, and gently fanning her.

She stared at M. Fanjat and the colonel as they came up; then, like a dumb animal that recognizes its master, she slowly turned her face towards the Countess, and watched over her as before, showing not the slightest sign of intelligence or of astonishment. The air was scorching. The glittering particles of the stone bench shone like sparks of fire; the meadow sent up the quivering vapors that hover above the grass and gleam like golden dust when they catch the light, but Geneviève did not seem to feel the raging heat.

The colonel wrung M. Fanjat's hands; the tears that gathered in the soldier's eyes stole down his cheeks, and fell on the grass at Stéphanie's feet.

"Sir," said her uncle, "for these two years my heart has been broken daily. Before very long you will be as I am; if you do not weep, you will not feel your anguish the less."

"You have taken care of her!" said the colonel, and jealousy no less than gratitude could be read in his eyes.

The two men understood one another. They grasped each other by the hand again, and stood motionless, gazing in admiration at the serenity that slumber had brought into the

lovely face before them. Stéphanie heaved a sigh from time to time, and this sigh, that had all the appearance of sensibility, made the unhappy colonel tremble with gladness.

"Alas!" M. Fanjat said gently, "do not deceive yourself, monsieur; as you see her now, she is in full possession of such reason as she has."

Those who have sat for whole hours absorbed in the delight of watching over the slumber of some tenderly-beloved one, whose waking eyes will smile for them, will doubtless understand the bliss and anguish that shook the colonel. For him this slumber was an illusion, the waking must be a kind of death, the most dreadful of all deaths.

Suddenly a kid frisked in two or three bounds towards the bench, and snuffed at Stéphanie. The sound awakened her; she sprang lightly to her feet without scaring away the capricious creature; but as soon as she saw Philip she fled, followed by her four-footed playmate, to a thicket of elder trees; then she uttered a little cry like the note of a startled wild-bird, the same sound that the colonel had heard once before near the grating, when the Countess appeared to M. d'Albon for the first time. At length she climbed into a laburnum tree, ensconced herself in the feathery greenery, and peered at the *strange man* with as much interest as the most inquisitive nightingale in the forest.

"Farewell, farewell, farewell," she said, but the soul sent no trace of expression of feeling through the words, spoken with the careless intonation of a bird's notes.

"She does not know me!" the colonel exclaimed in despair. "Stéphanie! Here is Philip, your Philip!—— Philip!" and the poor soldier went towards the laburnum tree; but when he stood three paces away, the Countess eyed him almost defiantly, though there was timidity in her eyes; then at a bound she sprang from the laburnum to an acacia, and thence to a spruce-fir, swinging from bough to bough with marvelous dexterity.

"Do not follow her," said M. Fanjat, addressing the colonel. "You would arouse a feeling of aversion in her which might become insurmountable; I will help you to make her acquaintance and to tame her. Sit down on the bench. If you pay no heed whatever to her, poor child, it will not be long before you will see her come nearer by degrees to look at you."

"That *she* should not know me! that *she* should fly from me!" the colonel repeated, sitting down on a rustic bench and leaning his back against a tree that overshadowed it.

He bowed his head. The doctor remained silent. Before very long the Countess stole softly down from her high refuge in the spruce-fir, flitting like a will-of-the-wisp; for, as the wind stirred through the boughs, she lent herself at times to the swaying movements of the trees. At each branch she stopped and peered at the stranger; but as she saw him sitting motionless, she at length jumped down to the grass, stood a while, and came slowly across the meadow. When she took up her position by a tree about ten paces from the bench, M. Fanjat spoke to the colonel in a low voice.

"Feel in my pocket for some lumps of sugar," he said, "and let her see them, she will come; I willingly give up to you the pleasure of giving her sweetmeats. She is passionately fond of sugar, and by that means you will accustom her to come to you and to know you."

"She never cared for sweet things when she was a woman," Philip answered sadly.

When he held out the lump of sugar between his thumb and finger, and shook it, Stéphanie uttered the wild note again, and sprang quickly towards him; then she stopped short, there was a conflict between longing for the sweet morsel and instinctive fear of him; she looked at the sugar, turned her head away, and looked again like an unfortunate dog forbidden to touch some scrap of food, while his master slowly recites the greater part of the alphabet until he reaches

the letter that gives permission. At length animal appetite conquered fear; Stéphanie rushed to Philip, held out a dainty brown hand to pounce upon the coveted morsel, touched her lover's fingers, snatched the piece of sugar, and vanished with it into a thicket. This painful scene was too much for the colonel; he burst into tears, and took refuge in the drawing-room.

"Then has love less courage than affection?" M. Fanjat asked him. "I have hope, Monsieur le Baron. My poor niece was once in a far more pitiable state than at present."

"Is it possible?" cried Philip.

"She would not wear clothes," answered the doctor.

The colonel shuddered, and his face grew pale. To the doctor's mind this pallor was an unhealthy symptom; he went over to him and felt his pulse, M. de Sucy was in a high fever; by dint of persuasion, he succeeded in putting the patient in bed, and gave him a few drops of laudanum to gain repose and sleep.

The Baron de Sucy spent nearly a week, in a constant struggle with a deadly anguish, and before long he had no tears left to shed. He was often wellnigh heart-broken; he could not grow accustomed to the sight of the Countess' madness; but he made terms for himself, as it were, in this cruel position, and sought alleviations in his pain. His heroism was boundless. He found courage to overcome Stéphanie's wild shyness by choosing sweetmeats for her, and devoted all his thoughts to this, bringing these dainties, and following up the little victories that he set himself to gain over Stéphanie's instincts (the last gleam of intelligence in her), until he succeeded to some extent—she grew tamer than ever before. Every morning the colonel went into the park; and if, after a long search for the Countess, he could not discover the tree in which she was rocking herself gently, nor the nook where she lay crouching at play with some bird, nor the roof where she had perched herself, he would whistle the well-known air

Partant pour la Syrie, which recalled old memories of their love, and Stéphanie would run towards him lightly as a fawn. She saw the colonel so often that she was no longer afraid of him; before very long she would sit on his knee with her thin, lithe arms about him. And while thus they sat as lovers love to do, Philip doled out sweetmeats one by one to the eager Countess. When they were all finished, the fancy often took Stéphanie to search through her lover's pockets with a monkey's quick instinctive dexterity, till she had assured herself that there was nothing left, and then she gazed at Philip with vacant eyes; there was no thought, no gratitude in their clear depths. Then she would play with him. She tried to take off his boots to see his foot; she tore his gloves to shreds, and put on his hat; and she would let him pass his hands through her hair, and take her in his arms, and submit passively to his passionate kisses, and at last, if he shed tears, she would gaze silently at him.

She quite understood the signal when he whistled *Partant pour la Syrie*, but he could never succeed in inducing her to pronounce her own name—*Stéphanie*. Philip persevered in his heart-rending task, sustained by a hope that never left him. If on some bright autumn morning he saw her sitting quietly on a bench under a poplar tree, grown brown now as the season wore, the unhappy lover would lie at her feet and gaze into her eyes as long as she would let him gaze, hoping that some spark of intelligence might gleam from them. At times he lent himself to an illusion; he would imagine that he saw the hard, changeless light in them falter, that there was a new life and softness in them, and he would cry, "Stéphanie! oh, Stéphanie! you hear me, you see me, do you not?"

But for her the sound of his voice was like any other sound, the stirring of the wind in the trees, or the lowing of the cow on which she scrambled; and the colonel wrung his hands in a despair that lost none of its bitterness; nay, time and these vain efforts only added to his anguish.

One evening, under the quiet sky, in the midst of the silence and peace of the forest hermitage, M. Fanjat saw from a distance that the Baron was busy loading a pistol, and knew that the lover had given up all hope. The blood surged to the old doctor's heart; and if he overcame the dizzy sensation that seized on him, it was because he would rather see his niece live with a disordered brain than lose her for ever. He hurried to the place.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

"That is for me," the colonel answered, pointing to a loaded pistol on the bench, "and this is for her!" he added, as he rammed down the wad into the pistol that he held in his hands.

The Countess lay stretched out on the ground, playing with the balls.

"Then you do not know that last night, as she slept, she murmured 'Philip?'" said the doctor quietly, dissembling his alarm.

"She called my name?" cried the Baron, letting his weapon fall. Stéphanie picked it up, but he snatched it out of her hands, caught the other pistol from the bench and fled.

"Poor little one!" exclaimed the doctor, rejoicing that his stratagem had succeeded so well. He held her tightly to his heart as he went on. "He would have killed you, selfish that he is! He wants you to die because he is unhappy. He cannot learn to love you for your own sake, little one! We forgive him, do we not? He is senseless; you are only mad. Never mind; God alone shall take you to Himself. We look upon you as unhappy because you no longer share our miseries, fools that we are!—— Why, she is happy," he said, taking her on his knee; "nothing troubles her; she lives like the birds, like the deer——"

Stéphanie sprang upon a young blackbird that was hopping about, caught it with a little shriek of glee, twisted its neck,

looked at the dead bird, and dropped it at the foot of a tree without giving it another thought.

The next morning at daybreak the colonel went out into the garden to look for Stéphanie; hope was very strong in him. He did not see her, and whistled; and when she came, he took her arm, and for the first time they walked together along an alley beneath the trees, while the fresh morning wind shook down the dead leaves about them. The colonel sat down, and Stéphanie, of her own accord, lit upon his knee. Philip trembled with gladness.

"Love!" he cried, covering her hands with passionate kisses, "I am Philip——"

She looked curiously at him.

"Come close," he added, as he held her tightly. "Do you feel the beating of my heart? It has beat for you, for you only. I love you always. Philip is not dead. He is here. You are sitting on his knee. You are my Stéphanie, I am your Philip!"

"Farewell!" she said, "farewell!"

The colonel shivered. He thought that some vibration of his highly-wrought feeling had surely reached his beloved; that the heart-rending cry drawn from him by hope, the utmost effort of a love that must last for ever, of passion in its ecstasy, striving to reach the soul of the woman he loved, must awaken her.

"Oh, Stéphanie! we shall be happy yet!"

A cry of satisfaction broke from her, a dim light of intelligence gleamed in her eyes.

"She knows me! Stéphanie!——"

The colonel felt his heart swell, and tears gathered under his eyelids. But all at once the Countess held up a bit of sugar for him to see; she had discovered it by searching diligently for it while he spoke. What he had mistaken for a human thought was a degree of reason required for a monkey's mischievous trick!

Philip fainted. M. Fanjat found the Countess sitting on his prostrate body. She was nibbling her bit of sugar, giving expression to her enjoyment by little grimaces and gestures that would have been thought clever in a woman in full possession of her senses if she tried to mimic her paroquet or her cat.

"Oh, my friend!" cried Philip, when he came to himself. "This is like death every moment of the day! I love her too much! I could bear anything if only through her madness she had kept some little trace of womanhood. But, day after day, to see her like a wild animal, not even a sense of modesty left, to see her——"

"So you must have a theatrical madness, must you?" said the doctor sharply, "and your prejudices are stronger than your lover's devotion? What, monsieur! I resign to you the sad pleasure of giving my niece her food and the enjoyment of her playtime; I have kept for myself nothing but the most burdensome cares. I watch over her while you are asleep, I—— Go, monsieur, and give up the task. Leave this dreary hermitage; I can live with my little darling; I understand her disease; I study her movements; I know her secrets. Some day you will thank me."

The colonel left the Minorite convent, that he was destined to see only once again. The doctor was alarmed by the effect that his words made upon his guest; his niece's lover became as dear to him as his niece. If either of them deserved to be pitied, that one was certainly Philip; did he not bear alone the burden of an appalling sorrow?

The doctor made inquiries, and learned that the hapless colonel had retired to a country house of his near Saint-Germain. A dream had suggested to him a plan for restoring the Countess to reason, and the doctor did not know that he was spending the rest of the autumn in carrying out a vast scheme. A small stream ran through his park, and in the winter-time flooded a low-lying land, something like the plain on the

eastern side of the Beresina. The village of Satout, on the slope of a ridge above it, bounded the horizon of a picture of desolation, something as Studzianka lay on the heights that shut in the swamp of the Beresina. The colonel set laborers to work to make a channel to resemble the greedy river that had swallowed up the treasures of France and Napoleon's army. By the help of his memories, Philip reconstructed on his own lands the bank where General Eblé had built his bridges. He drove in piles, and then set fire to them, so as to reproduce the charred and blackened balks of timber that on either side of the river told the stragglers that their retreat to France had been cut off. He had materials collected like the fragments out of which his comrades in misfortune had made the raft; his park was laid waste to complete the illusion on which his last hopes were founded. He ordered ragged uniforms and clothing for several hundred peasants. Huts and bivouacs and batteries were raised and burned down. In short, he omitted no device that could reproduce that most hideous of all scenes. He succeeded. When, in the earliest days of December, snow covered the earth with a thick white mantle, it seemed to him that he saw the Beresina itself. The mimic Russia was so startlingly real, that several of his old comrades recognized the scene of their past sufferings. M. de Sucy kept the secret of the drama to be enacted with this tragical background, but it was looked upon as a mad freak on his part, in several of the leading circles of society in Paris.

In the early days of the month of January, 1820, the colonel drove over to the Forest of l'Isle-Adam in a carriage like the one in which M. and Mme. de Vandières had driven from Moscow to Studzianka. The horses closely resembled that other pair that he had risked his life to bring from the Russian lines. He himself wore the grotesque and soiled clothes, accoutrements, and cap that he had worn on the 29th of November, 1812. He had even allowed his hair and beard

to grow, and neglected his appearance, that no detail might be lacking to recall the scene in all its horror.

"I guessed what you meant to do," cried M. Fanjat, when he saw the colonel dismount. "If you mean your plan to succeed, do not let her see you in that carriage. This evening I will give my niece a little laudanum, and while she sleeps we will dress her in such clothes as she wore at Studzianka, and put her in your traveling carriage. I will follow you in a berline."

Soon after two o'clock in the morning, the young Countess was lifted into the carriage, laid on the cushions, and wrapped in a coarse blanket. A few peasants held torches while this strange elopement was arranged.

A sudden cry rang through the silence of night, and Philip and the doctor, turning, saw Geneviève. She had come out half-dressed from the low room where she slept.

"Farewell, farewell; it is all over, farewell!" she called, crying bitterly.

"Why, Geneviève, what is it?" asked M. Fanjat.

Geneviève shook her head despairingly, raised her arm to heaven, looked at the carriage, uttered a long snarling sound, and, with evident signs of profound terror, slunk in again.

"'Tis a good omen," cried the colonel. "The girl is sorry to lose her companion. Very likely she *sees* that Stéphanie is about to recover her reason."

"God grant it may be so!" answered M. Fanjat, who seemed to be affected by this incident. Since insanity had interested him, he had known several cases in which a spirit of prophecy and the gift of second-sight had been accorded to a disordered brain—two faculties which many travelers tell us are also found among savage tribes.

So it happened that, as the colonel had foreseen and arranged, Stéphanie traveled across the mimic Beresina about nine o'clock in the morning, and was awakened by an explosion of rockets about a hundred paces from the scene of action.

It was a signal. Hundreds of peasants raised a terrible clamor, like the despairing shouts that startled the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers learned that by their own fault they were delivered over to death or to slavery.

When the Countess heard the report and the cries that followed she sprang out of the carriage and rushed in frenzied anguish over the snow-covered plain; she saw the burned bivouacs and the fatal raft about to be launched on a frozen Beresina. She saw Major Philip brandishing his sabre among the crowd. The cry that broke from Mme. de Vandières made the blood run cold in the veins of all who heard it. She stood face to face with the colonel, who watched her with a beating heart. At first she stared blankly at the strange scene about her, then she reflected. For an instant, brief as a lightning flash, there was the same quick gaze and total lack of comprehension that we see in the bright eyes of a bird; then she passed her hand across her forehead with the intelligent expression of a thinking being; she looked round on the memories that had taken substantial form, into the past life that had been transported into her present; she turned her face to Philip—and saw him! An awed silence fell upon the crowd. The colonel breathed hard, but dared not speak; tears filled the doctor's eyes. A faint color overspread Stéphanie's beautiful face, deepening slowly, till at last she glowed like a girl radiant with youth. Still the bright flush grew. Life and joy, kindled within her as the blaze of intelligence, swept through her like leaping flames. A convulsive tremor ran from her feet to her heart. But all these tokens, which flashed on the sight in a moment, gathered and gained consistence, as it were, when Stéphanie's eyes gleamed with heavenly radiance, the light of a soul within. She lived, she thought! She shuddered—was it with fear? God Himself unloosed a second time the tongue that had been bound by death, and set His fire anew in the extinguished soul. The

electric torrent of the human will vivified the body whence it had so long been absent.

"Stéphanie!" the colonel cried.

"Oh! it is Philip!" said the poor Countess.

She fled to the trembling arms held out towards her, and the embrace of the two lovers frightened those who beheld it. Stéphanie burst into tears.

Suddenly the tears ceased to flow; she lay in his arms a dead weight, as if stricken by a thunderbolt, and said faintly—

"Farewell, Philip!—— I love you—— farewell!"

"She is dead!" cried the colonel, unclasping his arms.

The old doctor received the lifeless body of his niece in his arms as a young man might have done; he carried her to a stack of wood and set her down. He looked at her face, and laid a feeble hand, tremulous with agitation, upon her heart —it beat no longer.

"Can it really be so?" he said, looking from the colonel, who stood there motionless, to Stéphanie's face. Death had invested it with a radiant beauty, a transient aureole, the pledge, it may be, of a glorious life to come.

"Yes, she is dead."

"Oh, but that smile!" cried Philip; "only see that smile. Is it possible?"

"She has grown cold already," answered M. Fanjat.

M. de Sucy made a few strides to tear himself from the sight; then he stopped, and whistled the air that the mad Stéphanie had understood; and when he saw that she did not rise and hasten to him, he walked away, staggering like a drunken man, still whistling, but he did not turn again.

In society General de Sucy is looked upon as very agreeable, and, above all things, as very lively and amusing. Not very long ago a lady complimented him upon his good humor and equable temper.

"Ah! madame," he answered, "I pay very dearly for my merriment in the evening if I am alone."

"Then, you are never alone, I suppose."

"No," he answered, smiling.

If a keen observer of human nature could have seen the look that Sucy's face wore at that moment, he would, without doubt, have shuddered.

"Why do you not marry?" the lady asked (she had several daughters of her own at a boarding-school). "You are wealthy; you belong to an old and noble house; you are clever; you have a future before you; everything smiles upon you."

"Yes," he answered; "one smile is killing me——"

On the morrow the lady heard with amazement that M. de Sucy had shot himself through the head that night.

The fashionable world discussed the extraordinary news in divers ways, and each had a theory to account for it; play, love, ambition, irregularities in private life, according to the taste of the speaker, explained the last act of the tragedy began in 1812. Two men alone, a magistrate and an old doctor, knew that Monsieur le Comte de Sucy was one of those souls unhappy in the strength God gives them to enable them to triumph daily in a ghastly struggle with a mysterious horror. If for a moment God withdraws His sustaining hand, they succumb.

PARIS, *March*, 1830.

A SEASIDE TRAGEDY.*

(*Un Drame au bord de la mer.*)

To Madame la Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod, née Comtesse Walewska, this souvenir of the Author is respectfully dedicated.

THE young for the most part delight to measure the future with a pair of compasses of their own; when the strength of the will equals the boldness of the angle that they thus project, the whole world is theirs.

This phenomenon of mental existence takes place, however, only at a certain age, and that age, without exception, lies in the years between twenty-two and eight-and-twenty. It is an age of first conceptions, because it is an age of vast longings, an age which is doubtful of nothing; doubt at that time is a confession of weakness; it passes as swiftly as the sowing time, and is followed by the age of execution. There are in some manner two periods of youth in every life—the youth of confident hopes, and the youth of action; sometimes in those whom nature has favored, the two ages coincide, and then we have a Cæsar, a Newton, or a Bonaparte—the greatest among great men.

I was measuring the space of time that a single thought needs for its development, and (compass in hand) stood on a crag a hundred fathoms above the sea, surveying my future, and filling it with great works, like an engineer who should survey an empty land, and cover it with fortresses and palaces. The sea was calm, the waves toyed with the reefs of rock. I had just dressed after a swim, and was waiting for Pauline, my guardian angel, who was bathing in a granite basin floored

* A letter written by Louis Lambert.

with fine sand, the daintiest bathing-place of nature's fashioning for the sea-fairies.

We were at the utmost extremity of Croisic-point, a tiny peninsula in Brittany; we were far from the haven itself, and in a part of the coast so inaccessible that the inland revenue department ignored it, and a coastguard scarcely ever passed that way. Ah! to dip in the winds of space, after a plunge in the sea! Who would not have launched forth into the future? Why did I think? Why does a trouble invade us? Who knows? Ideas drift across heart and brain by no will of yours. No courtesan is more capricious, more imperious, than an artist's inspiration; you must seize her like fortune, and grasp her by the hair—when she comes. Borne aloft by my thought, like Astolpho upon his hippogriff, I rode across my world, and arranged it all to my liking. Then when I was fain to find some augury in the things about me for these daring castles that a wild imagination bade me build, I heard a sweet cry above the murmur of the restless sea-fringe that marks the ebb and flow of the tide upon the shore, the sound of a woman's voice calling to me through the loneliness and silence, the glad cry of a woman fresh from the sea. It was as if a soul leaped forth in that cry, and it seemed to me as if I had seen the footprints of an angel on the bare rocks, an angel with outspread wings, who cried, "You will succeed!" I came down, radiant and light of foot, by bounds, like a pebble flung down some steep slope. "What is it?" she asked as soon as she saw me, and I did not answer; my eyes were full of tears.

Yesterday Pauline had felt my sorrow, as to-day she felt my joy, with the magical responsiveness of a harp that is sensitive to every change in the atmosphere. Life has exquisite moments. We went in silence along the beach. The sky was cloudless; there was not a ripple on the sea; others might have seen nothing there but two vast blue steppes above and below; but as for us, who had no need of words to understand

each other, who could conjure up illusions to feast the eyes of youth and fill the space between the zones of sea and sky—those swaddling-bands of the Infinite—we pressed each other's hands at the slightest change that passed over the fields of water or the fields of air, for in those fleeting signs we read the interpretation of our double thought. Who has not known, in the midst of pleasure, the moment of infinite joy when the soul slips its fetters of flesh, as it were, and returns to the world whence it came? And pleasure is not our only guide to those regions; are there not hours when feeling and thought intertwine with thought and feeling, and fare forth together as two children who take each other by the hand and run, without knowing why? We went thus.

The roofs of the town had come to be a faint gray line on the horizon by the time that we came upon a poor fisherman on his way back to Croisic. He was barefooted; his trousers, of linen cloth, were botched, and tattered, and fringed with rags; he wore a shirt of sailcloth, and a mere rag of a jacket. This wretchedness jarred upon us, as if it had been a discordant note in the midst of our harmony. We both looked at each other, regretting that we had not Abul Kasim's treasury to draw upon at that moment. The fisherman was swinging a splendid lobster and an adder-pike on a string in his right hand, while in the left he carried his fishing tackle. We called to him, with a view to buying his fish. The same idea that occurred to us both found expression in a smile, to which I replied by a light pressure of the arm that lay in mine as I drew it closer to my heart.

It was one of those nothings that memory afterwards weaves into poems, when by the fireside our thoughts turn to the hour when that nothing so moved us, and the place rises before us seen through a mirage which as yet has not been investigated, a magical illusion that often invests material things about us during those moments when life flows swiftly and our hearts are full. The most beautiful places are only what we make them.

What man is there, with something of a poet in him, who does not find that some fragment of rock holds a larger place in his memories than famous views in many lands which he has made costly journeyings to see? Beside that rock what thoughts surged through him! There he lived through a whole life; there fears were dissipated, and gleams of hope shone into the depths of his soul. At that moment the sun, as if sympathizing with those thoughts of love or of the future, cast a glow of light and warmth over the tawny sides of the rock; his eyes were drawn to a mountain flower here and there on its sides, and the crannies and rifts grew larger in the silence and peace; the mass, so dark in reality, took the hue of his dreams; and then how beautiful it was with its scanty plant life, its pungent-scented camomile flowers, its velvet fronds of maiden-hair fern! How splendidly decked for a prolonged festival of human powers exultant in their strength! Once already the Lake of Bienne, seen from the island of Saint-Pierre, had so spoken to me; perhaps the rock at Croisic will be the last of these joys. But, then, what will become of Pauline?

"You have had a fine catch this morning, good man," I said to the fisherman.

"Yes, sir," he answered, coming to a stand; and we saw his face, swarthy with exposure to the sun's rays that beat down on the surface of the sea. The expression of his face told of the patient resignation and the simple manners of fisher-folk. There was no roughness in the man's voice; he had a kindly mouth, and there was an indefinable something about him—ambitionless, starved, and stunted. We should have been disappointed if he had looked otherwise.

"Where will you sell the fish?"

"In the town."

"What will they give you for the lobster?"

"Fifteen sous."

"And for the adder-pike?"

"Twenty sous."

"Why does it cost so much more than the lobster?"

"Oh! the adder-pike" (he called it an *etter*-pike) "is much more delicate, sir! And then they are as spiteful as monkeys, and very hard to catch."

"Will you let us have them both for five francs?" asked Pauline. The man stood stock-still with astonishment.

"You shall not have them!" I cried, laughing. "I bid ten francs for them. Emotions should be paid for at a proper rate."

"Quite right," returned she; "but I mean to have them. I bid ten francs two sous for them."

"Ten sous."

"Twelve francs."

"Fifteen francs."

"Fifteen francs fifty centimes," said she.

"A hundred francs."

"A hundred and fifty."

I bowed. We were not rich enough just then to bid against each other any longer. Our poor fisherman was mystified, not knowing whether to be annoyed or to give himself up to joy; but we helped him out of his difficulty by telling him where we lodged, and bidding him take the lobster and the adder-pike to our landlady.

"Is that how you make a living?" I asked, wondering how he came to be so poor.

"It is about all I can do, and it is a very hard life," he said. "Shore fishing is a chancy trade when you have neither boat nor nets and must do it with hooks and tackle. You have to wait for the tide, you see, for the fish or the shell-fish, while those who do things on a large scale put out to sea. It is so hard to make a living at it that I am the only shore-fisher in these parts. For whole days together I get nothing at all. For if you are to catch anything, an adder-pike must fall asleep and get left by the tide, like this one here, or a lobster

must be fool enough to stick to the rocks. Sometimes some bass come up with a high tide, and then I get hold of them."

"And, after all, taking one thing with another, what do you make each day?"

"Eleven or twelve sous. I could get on if I had no one but myself, but I have my father to keep, and the old man can't help me; he is blind."

The words came from him quite simply; Pauline and I looked at each other in silence.

"Have you a wife or a sweetheart?"

He glanced at us with one of the most piteous expressions that I have ever seen on a human face, and answered, "If I had a wife, I should have to turn my old father adrift; I could not keep him and keep a wife and children too."

"But, my good fellow, why don't you try to earn something more by carrying salt in the haven or by working in the salt pits?"

"Ah! sir, I could not stand the work for three months. I am not strong enough, and if anything happened to me my father would have to beg. The only kind of work for me is something that wants a little skill and a lot of patience."

"But how can two people live on twelve sous a day?"

"Oh, sir, we live on buckwheat bannocks and the barnacles I break off the rocks."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Have you always stopped here?"

"I once went to Guérande to be drawn for the army, and once to Savenay to be examined by some gentlemen who measured me. If I had been an inch taller, they would have made me into a soldier. The first long march would have put an end to me, and my poor father would have been begging his bread this day."

I have imagined many tragedies, and Pauline, who passes her life by the side of a man who suffers as I do, is used to strong emotion, yet neither of us had ever heard words so touching as these of the fisherman. We walked on for several steps in silence, fathoming the dumb depths of this stranger's life, admiring the nobleness of a sacrifice made unconsciously ; the strength of his weakness made us marvel, his reckless generosity humbled us. A vision of the life of this poor creature rose before me, a life of pure instinct, a being chained to his rock like a convict fettered to a cannon-ball, seeking for shell-fish to gain a livelihood, and upheld in that long patience of twenty years by a single feeling! How many hopes disappointed by a squall or a change in the weather! And while he was hanging over the edge of a block of granite with arms outstretched like a Hindoo fakir, his old father, crouching on his stool in the dark, silent hut, was waiting for the coarsest of the shell-fish, and bread, if the sea should please.

"Do you drink wine now and then?" I asked.

"Three or four times a year."

"Very well, you shall drink wine to-day, you and your father ; and we will send you a white loaf."

"You are very kind, sir."

"We will give you the wherewithal for dinner, if you care to show us the way along the shore to Batz, where we shall see the tower that gives you a view of the harbor and the shore between Batz and Croisic."

"With pleasure," said he. "Go straight on, follow the road you are in ; I will overtake you again when I have gotten rid of my tackle."

We both made the same sign of assent, and he rushed off towards the town in great spirits. We were still as we had been before, but the meeting had dimmed our joyousness.

"Poor man!" Pauline exclaimed, in the tone that takes from a woman's compassion any trace of the something that

wounds us in pity, "it makes one ashamed to feel happy when he is so miserable, doesn't it?"

"There is nothing more bitter than helpless wishing," I answered. "The two poor creatures, this father and son, could no more understand how keen our sympathy has been than the world could understand the beauty in that life of theirs, for they are laying up treasures in heaven."

"Poor country!" she said, pointing out to me the heaps of cow-dung spread along a field under a wall of unhewn stones. "I asked why they did that, and a peasant woman who was spreading it said that she was 'making firewood.' Just imagine, dear, that when the cow-dung is dry, the poor people heap it up and light fires with it. During the winter they sell it, like blocks of bark fuel. And, finally, how much do you think the best-paid sempstresses earn? Five sous a day and their board," she went on after a pause.

"Look," I said, "the sea-winds blight or uproot everything; there are no trees. Those who can afford it burn the driftwood and broken-up boats; it costs too dear, I expect, to bring firewood from other parts of Brittany where there is so much timber. It is a country without beauty, save for great souls, and those who have no hearts could not live here—it is a land for poets and barnacles, and nothing between. It was only when the salt warehouses were built on the cliff that people came to live here. There is nothing here but the sand, the sea beyond it, and above us—space."

We had already passed the town, and were crossing the waste between Croisic and the market-town of Batz. Imagine, dear uncle, two leagues of waste covered with gleaming sand. Here and there a few rocks raised their heads; you might almost think that extinct monsters were crouching among the dunes. The waves broke over the low ridges along the margin of the sea, till they looked like large white roses floating on the surface of the water and drifted up upon the beach. I looked across this savanna that lay between the ocean on the

right and the great lagoon on the left, made by the encroaching sea between Croisic and the sandy heights of Guérande, with the barren salt marshes at their feet; then I looked at Pauline, and asked if she felt able to walk across the sands in the burning sun.

"I have laced boots on; let us go over there," she said, looking towards the Tower of Batz, which caught the eye by its great mass, erected there like a pyramid in the desert, a slender spindle-shaped pyramid however, a pyramid so picturesquely ornate that one could imagine it to be an outlying sentinel ruin of some great Eastern town laid desolate.

We went a few paces further to reach a fragment of rock to sit in the shade that it still cast, but it was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the shadows which crept closer and closer to our feet swiftly disappeared altogether.

"How beautiful the silence is," she said; "and how the murmur of the sea beating steadily against the beach deepens it!"

"If you surrender your mind to the three immensities around us—the air, the sea, and the sands"—I answered, "and heed nothing but the monotonous sound of the ebb and flow, you would find its speech intolerable, for you would think that it bore the burden of a thought that would overwhelm you. Yesterday, at sunset, I felt that sensation; it crushed me."

"Oh yes, let us talk," she said, after a long pause. "No speaker is more terrible. I imagine that I am discovering the causes of the harmonies about us," she went on. "This landscape that has but three contrasting colors—the gleaming yellow of the sand, the blue heavens, and the changeless green of the sea—is great without anything savage in its grandeur, vast but not desolate, monotonous but not dreary; it is made up of three elements; it has variety."

"Women alone can render their impressions like that," I said; "you would be the despair of a poet, dear soul, that I have read so well."

"These three expressions of the Infinite glow like a burning flame in the noonday heat," Pauline said, laughing. "Here I can imagine the poetry and passions of the East."

"And I, a vision of despair."

"Yes," she said; "the dune is a sublime cloister."

We heard our guide hurrying after us; he wore his holiday clothes. We asked him a few insignificant questions; he thought he saw that our mood had changed, and, with the self-repression that misfortune teaches, he was silent; and we also —though from time to time each pressed the hand of the other to communicate thoughts and impressions—walked for half an hour in silence, either because the shimmering heat above the sands lay heavily upon us, or because the difficulty of walking absorbed our attention. We walked hand in hand like two children; we should not have gone a dozen paces if we had walked arm in arm.

The way that led to Batz was little more than a track; the first high wind effaced the ruts or the dints left by horses' hoofs; but the experienced eyes of our guide discerned traces of cattle and sheep dung on this way, which sometimes wound towards the sea and sometimes towards the land, to avoid the cliffs on the one hand and the rocks on the other. It was noon, and we were only half-way.

"We will rest there," I said, pointing to a headland where the rocks rose high enough to make it probable that we might find a cave among them. The fisherman, following the direction of my finger, jerked his head.

"There is some one there! Any one coming from market at Batz to Croisic, or from Croisic to Batz, always goes round some way so as not to pass near the place."

He spoke in a low voice that suggested a mystery.

"Then is there a robber there, a murderer?"

Our guide's only answer was a deep breath that left us twice as curious as before.

"If we go past, will any harm come to us?"

"Oh, no!"

"Will you go with us?"

"No, sir!"

"Then we shall go, if you will assure us that there is no danger for us."

"I do not say that," the fisherman answered quickly; "I only say that the one who is there will say nothing to you, and will do you no harm. Oh, good heavens! he will not so much as stir from his place."

"Then who is it?"

"A man!"

Never were two syllables uttered in such a tragical fashion.

At that moment we were some twenty paces away from the ridge about which the sea was lapping. Our guide took the way that avoided the rocks, and we held straight on for them, but Pauline took my arm. Our guide quickened his pace so as to reach the spot where the two ways met again at the same time as ourselves. He thought, no doubt, that when we had seen "the man," we should hurry from the place. This kindled our curiosity; it became so strong that our hearts beat fast, as if a feeling of terror possessed us both. In spite of the heat of the day and a certain weariness after our walk over the sands, our souls were steeped in the ineffable languid calm of an ecstasy that possessed us both, brimming with pure joy, that can only be compared with the delight of hearing exquisite music—music like the *Andiamo mio ben* of Mozart. When two souls are blended in one pure thought, are they not like two sweet voices singing together? Before you can appreciate the emotion that thrilled us both, you must likewise share in the half-voluptuous mood in which the morning's experiences had steeped us.

If you had watched for a while some daintily-colored wood-dove on a swaying branch, above a spring, you would utter a cry of distress if you saw a hawk pounce down, bury claws of steel in its heart, and bear it away with the murderous speed

with which powder wings a bullet. We had scarcely set foot in the space before the cavern, a sort of esplanade some hundred feet above the sea, protected from the surge by the steep rocks that sloped to the water's edge, when we were conscious of an electric thrill, something like the shock of a sudden awakening by some noise in a silent night. Both of us had seen a man sitting there on a block of granite, and he had looked at us.

That glance, from two bloodshot eyes, was like the flash of fire from a cannon, and his stoical immobility could only be compared to the changeless aspect of the granite slabs that lay about him. Slowly his eyes turned towards us; his body as rigid and motionless as if he had been turned to stone; then after that glance, that made such a powerful impression upon our minds, his eyes turned to gaze steadily over the vast stretch of sea, in spite of the glare reflected from it, as the eagle, it is said, gazes at the sun without lowering his eyelids, nor did he look up again from the waves.

Try to call up before you, dear uncle, some gnarled oak stump, with all its branches lately lopped away, rearing its head, like a strange apparition, by the side of a lonely road, and you will have a clear idea of this man that we saw. The form of an age-worn Hercules, the face of Olympian Jove bearing marks of the ravages of time, of a life of rough toil upon the sea, of sorrow within, of coarse food, and darkened as if blasted by lightning. I saw the muscles, like a framework of iron, standing out upon his hard shaggy hands, and all things else about him indicated a vigorous constitution. In a corner of the cavern I noticed a fairly large heap of moss, and on a rough slab of granite, that did duty as a table, a piece of a round loaf lay over the mouth of a stoneware pitcher.

Never among my visions of the life led in the desert by early Christian anchorites had I pictured a face more awe-inspiring, more grand and terrible in repentance than this. And even you, dear uncle, in your experience of the confes-

sional, have, perhaps, never seen a penitence so grand; for this remorse seemed to be drowned in a sea of prayers, of prayers that flowed for ever from a dumb despair. This fisherman, this rough Breton sailor, was sublime through a thought hidden within him. Had those eyes shed tears? Had the hand of that rough-hewn statue ever struck a blow? A fierce honesty was stamped upon a rugged forehead where force of character had still left some traces of the gentleness that is the prerogative of all true strength. Was that brow, so scored and furrowed with wrinkles, compatible with a great heart? How came this man to abide with the granite? How had the granite entered into him? Where did the granite end and the man begin? A whole crowd of thoughts passed through our minds; and, as our guide had expected, we went by quickly and in silence. When he saw us again, we were either perturbed with a sense of dread or overcome by the strangeness of this thing, but he did not remind us that his prediction had come true.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"What is the man?"

"They call him the man under a vow."

You can readily imagine how we both turned to our fisherman at these words. He was a simple-minded fellow; he understood our mute inquiry; and this is the story which I have tried to tell, as far as possible, in the homely language in which he told it.

"The Croisic folk and the people at Batz think that he has been guilty of something, madame, and that he is doing a penance laid upon him by a famous rector, to whom he went to confess, beyond Nantes. There are some who think that Cambremer (that is his name) is unlucky, and that it brings bad luck to pass through the air he breathes, so a good many of them before going round the rocks will stop to see which way the wind blows. If it blows from the nor'west," he said, pointing in that direction with his finger, "they would not

go on if they had set out to seek a bit of the True Cross; they turn back again; they are afraid. Other folk, rich people in Croisic, say that Cambremer once made a vow, and that is why he is called 'the man under a vow.' He never leaves the place; he is there night and day.

"There is some show of reason for these tales," he added, turning round to point out to us something that had escaped our notice. "You see that wooden cross that he has set up there on the left; that is to show that he has put himself under the protection of God and the Holy Virgin and the saints. He would not be respected as he is, if it were not that the terror people have of him makes him as safe as if he had a guard of soldiers.

"He has not said a word since he went into prison in the open air. He lives on bread and water that his brother's little girl brings him every morning, a little slip of a thing twelve years old; he has left all he has to her, and a pretty child she is, as gentle as a lamb, and full of fun, a dear little pet. She has blue eyes as long as *that*," he went on, holding out his thumb, "and hair like a cherub's. When you begin —'I say, Pérotte'—(that is what we say for *Pierrette*," he said, interrupting himself; "Saint Pierre is her patron saint, Cambremer's name is Pierre and he was her godfather)—'I say, Pérotte, what does your uncle say to you?'—'He says nothing,' says she, 'nothing whatever, nothing at all.'—'Well, then, what does he do when you go?'—'He kisses me on the forehead of a Sunday.'—'Aren't you afraid of him?' —'Not a bit,' says she; 'he is my godfather.'—He will not have any one else bring his food. Pérotte says that he smiles when she comes; but you might as well say that the sun shone in a fog, for he is as gloomy as a sea-mist, they say."

"But you are exciting our curiosity without satisfying it," I broke in. "Do you know what brought him there? Was it trouble, or remorse, or crime, or is he mad, or what?"

"Eh! sir, there is hardly a soul save my father and me that knows the rights of the matter. My mother that's gone was in service in the house of the justice that Cambremer went to. The priest told him to go to a justice, and only gave him absolution on that condition, if the tale is true that they tell in the haven. My poor mother overheard Cambremer without meaning to do so, because the kitchen was alongside the sitting-room in the justice's house. So she heard. She is dead, and the justice has gone too. My mother made us promise, my father and me, never to let on to the people round about; and I can tell you this, every hair bristled up on my head that night when my mother told us the story——"

"Well, then, tell it to us; we will not repeat it."

The fisherman looked at us both—then he went on, something after this fashion—

"Pierre Cambremer, whom you saw yonder, is the oldest of the family. The Cambremers have been seamen from father to son; you see, their name means that the sea has always bent under them. The one you saw had a fishing-boat, several fishing-boats, and the sardine-fishery was his trade, though he did deep-sea fishing as well for the dealers. He would have fitted out a bigger vessel, and gone to the cod-fishing, if he had not been so fond of his wife; a fine woman she was, a Brouin from Guérande, a strapping girl with a warm heart. She was so fond of Cambremer that she would never let her man go away from her for longer than for the sardine-fishing. They lived down yonder, there!" said our fisherman, standing on a hillock to point out to us an islet in the little inland sea between the dunes where we were walking and the salt marshes at Guérande. "Do you see the house? It belonged to him.

"Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer had but one child, a boy, whom they loved like—what shall I say?—like an only child; they were crazy over him. Their little Jacques might

have done something (asking your pardon) into the soup, and they would have thought it sweetened it. Times and times again we used to see them buying the finest toys at the fair for him! There was no sense in it—everybody told them so. Little Cambremer found out that he could do as he liked with them, and he grew as willful as a red donkey. If any one told his father, 'Your boy has all but killed little So-and-so,' Cambremer used to laugh and say, 'Bah! he will be a meddlesome sailor! He will command the king's ships.' Another would say, 'Pierre Cambremer, do you know that your lad put out Pougaud's little girl's eye?' 'He will be one for the girls,' Pierre would say. It was all right in his eyes. By the time the little rascal was ten years old he knocked everybody about, and twisted the fowls' necks for fun, and ripped open the pigs; he was as bloodthirsty as a weasel. 'He will make a famous soldier!' said Cambremer; 'he has a liking for bloodshed.'

"You see, I myself remember all this," said our fisherman; "and so does Cambremer," he added, after a pause.

"Jacques Cambremer grew up to be fifteen or sixteen and he was—well, a bully. He would go off and amuse himself at Guérande, and cut a figure at Savenay. He must have money for that. So he began robbing his mother, and she did not dare to tell her husband. Cambremer was so honest that if any one had overpaid him twopence on an account, he would have gone twenty leagues to pay it back. At last one day the mother had nothing left. While the father was away at the fishing, Jacques made off with the dresser, the plenishing, and the sheets and the linen, and left nothing but the four walls; he had sold all the things in the house to pay for his carryings-on at Nantes. The poor woman cried about it day and night. She would have to tell his father when he came back, and she was afraid of the father; not for herself though, not she! So when Pierre Cambremer came back and

saw his house furnished with things the neighbors had loaned her, he asked—

"'What does this mean?'

"And the poor thing, more dead than alive, answered, 'We have been robbed.'

"'What has become of Jacques?'

"'Jacques is away on a spree!'

"Nobody knew where the rogue had gone.

"'He is too fond of his fun,' said Pierre.

"Six months afterwards the poor father heard that Jacques had gotten into trouble at Nantes. He goes over on foot—it is quicker than going by sea—puts his hand on his son's shoulder, and fetches him home. He did not ask him, 'What have you been doing?'

"'If you don't keep steady here for a couple of years with your mother and me,' he said, 'and help with the fishing, and behave yourself like a decent fellow, you will have me to reckon with!'

"The harebrained youngster, counting on the weakness his father and mother had for him, made a grimace at his father, and thereupon Pierre fetched him a slap in the face that laid up Jacques for six months afterwards.

"The poor mother was breaking her heart all the time. One night she was lying quietly asleep by her husband's side, when she heard a noise and sat up, and got a stab in the arm from a knife. She shrieked; and when they had struck a light, Pierre Cambremer found that his wife was wounded. He thought it was a robber, as if there were any robbers in our part of the world, when you can carry ten thousand francs in gold from Croisic to Saint Nazaire, and no one would so much as ask you what you had under your arm. Pierre looked about for Jacques, and could not find him anywhere. In the morning the unnatural wretch had the face to come back and say that he had been at Batz.

"I should tell you that the mother did not know where to

hide her money. Cambremer himself used to leave his with M. Dupotet at Croisic. Their son's wild ways had eaten up crowns and francs and gold louis; they were ruined, as you may say, and it was hard on folk who had about twelve thousand livres, including their little island. Nobody knew how much Cambremer had paid down at Nantes to have his son back. Their luck went from bad to worse. One of Cambremer's brothers was unfortunate, and wanted help. Pierre told him, to comfort him, that Jacques and Pérotte (the younger brother's girl) should be married some day. Then, to put him in the way of earning his bread, he took him to help in the fishing; for Joseph Cambremer was obliged to work with his own hands. His wife had died of the fever, and he had to pay some one else to nurse Pérotte till she was weaned. Pierre Cambremer's wife owed as much as a hundred francs to different people on the baby's account for linen and things, and two or three months to big Frelu, who had a child by Simon Gaudry, and nursed Pérotte. La Cambremer, too, had sewn a Spanish doubloon into the flock of her mattress, and written on it, 'For Pérotte.' You see, she had had a good education, and could write like a clerk; she had taught her son to read too—that was the ruin of him.

"Nobody knew how it came about, but that scoundrel Jacques got wind of the gold and took it, and went off to get drunk at Croisic. Old Cambremer, just as if it had happened on purpose, came in with his boat; and as he came up to the house he saw a scrap of paper floating about. He picked it up and took it in to his wife; and she dropped down, for she knew her own handwriting. Cambremer said not a word. He went over to Croisic, and heard there that his son was in the billiard-room. Then he sent for the good woman who kept the café, and said to her—

"'I told Jacques not to change a piece of gold that he will pay his score with: let me have it; I will wait at the door, and you shall have silver for it.'

"The woman of the house brought him out the gold-piece. Cambremer took it.

"'Good!' said he, and he went away home.

"All the town knew that. But this I know, and the rest of them have only a sort of general guess at how it was. He told his wife to set their room to rights; it is on the ground floor. He kindled a fire on the hearth, he lighted two candles, and put two chairs on one side of the fireplace, and a three-legged stool on the other. Then he bade his wife put out the suit he was married in, and to put on her wedding-gown. He dressed himself; and then when he was dressed, he went out for his brother, and told him to keep watch outside the house, and give warning if he heard any sound on either beach, here by the sea or yonder on the salt marshes at Guérande. When he thought his wife must be dressed, he went in again; he loaded a gun and hid it in the chimney-corner.

"Back comes Jacques to the house. It was late when he came; he had been drinking and gambling up to ten o'clock; he had got some one to ferry him over at Carnouf point. His uncle heard him hail the boat, and went to look for him along the side of the salt marshes, and passed him without saying anything.

"When Jacques came in, his father spoke:

"'Sit you down there,' he said, pointing to the stool. 'You are before your father and mother; you have sinned against them, and they are your judges.'

"Jacques began to bellow, for Cambremer's face twitched strangely. The mother sat there, stiff as an oar.

"'If you make any noise, if you stir, if you don't sit straight up like a mast on your stool,' said Pierre, pointing his gun at him, 'I will shoot you like a dog.'

"Cambremer's son grew mute as a fish, and all this time the mother said not a word.

"'Here is a bit of paper that wrapped up a Spanish gold coin. That coin was in your mother's mattress. No one knew

where it was except your mother. I found the bit of paper floating on the water when I came in. Only this evening you changed the piece of Spanish gold at Mother Fleurant's, and your mother cannot find the coin in her mattress. Explain yourself.'

"Jacques said that he had not taken his mother's money, and that he had had the coin at Nantes.

"'So much the better,' said Pierre. 'How can you prove it?'

"'I did have it.'

"'You did not take your mother's coin?'

"'No.'

"'Can you swear it on your salvation?'

"He was just going to swear, when his mother looked up and said—

"'Jacques, my child, take care; do not swear if it is not true. You can repent and mend; there is still time,' and she cried at that.

"'You are a So-and-so,' said he; 'you have always tried to ruin me.'

"Cambremer turned white, and said, 'What you have just said to your mother goes to swell your account. Now, come to the point! Will you swear?'

"'Yes.'

"'Stop a bit,' said Pierre, 'was there a cross on your coin like the mark the sardine merchant put on the coin he paid me?'

"Jacques grew sober at that, and began to cry.

"'That is enough talk,' said Pierre. 'I say nothing of what you have done before—I had no mind that a Cambremer should die in the market-place at Croisic. Say your prayers, and let us be quick! A priest is coming to hear your confession.'

"The mother had gone out of the room that she might not hear her son's doom. As soon as she went out, Joseph Cam-

bremer, the uncle, came in with the rector from Piriac. To him Jacques would not open his mouth. He was shrewd; he knew his father well enough to feel sure that he would not kill him till he had confessed.

"'Thanks. Pardon us, sir,' Cambremer said to the priest when Jacques continued obstinate. 'I meant to give my son a lesson, and I beg you to say nothing about it. As for you,' he went on, turning to Jacques, 'if you do not mend your ways, next time you go wrong shall be the last, and shrift or no shrift, I will make an end of it.'

"He sent him off to bed. The young fellow believed him, and fancied that he could make things right with his father. He slept. His father sat up. When he saw his son fast asleep, he covered the young fellow's mouth with hemp, bound it tightly round with a strip of sailcloth; then he tied him hand and foot. He writhed, he 'shed tears of blood,' so Cambremer told the justice. What would you have! His mother flung herself at the father's feet.

"'He is doomed,' said Cambremer; 'you will help me to put him into the boat.'

"She would not help him, and Cambremer did it alone; he fastened him down in the bottom of the boat, and tied a stone round his neck, put out of the bay, reached the sea, and came out as far as the rock where he sits now. Then the poor mother, who had made her brother-in-law take her over, cried out in vain for mercy; it was like throwing a stone at a wolf. By the moonlight she saw the father take the son, towards whom her heart still yearned, and fling him into the water; and as there was not a breath of air stirring, she heard the gurgling sound, and then *nothing*—not an eddy, not a ripple; the sea is a famous keeper of secrets, that it is! When Cambremer reached the place to silence her moans, he found her lying like one dead. The two brothers could not carry her, so they had to put her in the boat that had carried

her son, and they took her round home by way of the Croisic channel.

"Ah, well! *la belle Brouin*, as they called her, did not live the week out. She died, asking her husband to burn the accursed boat. Oh! he did it; yes, he did it. He himself was queer after that; he did not know what ailed him; he reeled about like a man who cannot carry his wine. Then he went off somewhere for ten days, and came back again to put himself where you saw him; and since he has been there, he has not said a word."

The fisherman told us the story in a few minutes, in words even more simple than those that I have used. Working people make little comment on what they tell; they give you the facts that strike them, and interpret them by their own feelings. His language was as keenly incisive as the stroke of a hatchet.

"I shall not go to Batz," said Pauline, when we reached the outer rim of the lake.

We went back to Croisic by way of the salt marshes, the fisherman guiding us through the labyrinth. He had also grown silent. Our mood had changed. Both of us were deep in melancholy musings, and saddened by the mournful story which explained the swift presentiment that we had felt at the sight of Cambremer. We had each of us sufficient knowledge of human nature to fill in the outlines of the three lives that our guide had sketched for us. The tragedy of these three human beings rose up before us as if we saw scene after scene of a drama crowned by the father's expiation of an inevitable crime. We did not dare to look at the rocks where he sat, the fate-bound soul who struck terror into a whole country-side. A few clouds overcast the sky. The mist rose on the horizon of the sea. We were walking through the most acrid dreariness that I have ever seen; the earth beneath our feet seemed sick and unwholesome in these salt marshes,

which, with good reason, might be called a cutaneous eruption on the face of the earth. The ground is scored over in rough squares, with high banks of gray earth about them; each is full of brackish water; the salt rises to the surface. These artificial hollows are intersected by raised pathways, on which the workmen stand to skim the surface of the pools with long scrapers; and the salt, when collected, is deposited to drain on circular platforms set at even distances, till it is fit to lay up in heaps. For two hours we skirted this dreary chessboard, where the salt stops the growth of any green thing; occasionally, at long intervals, we came upon one or two *paludiers*, so they call the men who work among the salt marshes. These workers, or it should rather be said, this race apart among the Bretons, wear a special costume, a white jacket rather like those that brewers wear. They marry only among themselves; a girl belonging to this tribe has never been known to marry any one but a *paludier*. The hideous desolation of those swamps where the boggy soil is scraped up into symmetrical heaps, the grayness of the soil, from which every Breton flower shrinks in disgust, were in keeping with the sadness within us. We reached the spot where you cross an arm of the sea, the channel doubtless through which the salt-water breaks in upon the low-lying land and leaves its deposits on the soil, and we were glad to see the scanty plant-life growing along the edge of the sand. As we crossed it, we saw the island in the lagoon where the Cambremers once lived, and turned our heads away.

When we reached our inn we noticed a billiard-table in the room on the ground floor, and when we learned that it was the only public billiard-table in Croisic, we made our preparations for departure that night, and on the morrow we went to Guérande.

Pauline was still depressed, and I myself felt a return of the burning sensation that scorches my brain. I was so grievously haunted by the visions of those three lives that I had

conjured up, that Pauline said, "Write the story, Louis, and the fever may take a turn."

So, dear uncle, I have written the story for you; but our adventure has already undone the good effects of repose, the result of our stay here and at the Baths.

PARIS, *November* 20, 1834.

THE COUNTRY PARSON
ALBERT SAVARON

PREFACE.

PERHAPS in no instance of Balzac's work is his singular fancy for pulling that work about more remarkably instanced and illustrated than in the case of "The Country Parson." The double date, 1837–1845, which the author attached to it, in his usual conscientious manner, to indicate these revisions, has a greater signification than almost anywhere else. When the book, or rather its constituent parts, first appeared in the *Presse* for 1839, having been written the winter before, not only was it very different in detail, but the order of the parts was altogether dissimilar. Balzac here carried out his favorite plan—a plan followed by many other authors no doubt, but always, as it seems to me, of questionable wisdom—that of beginning in the middle and then "throwing back" with a long retrospective and explanatory digression.

In this version the story of Tascheron's crime and its punishment came first; and it was not till after the execution that the early history of Véronique (who gave her name to this part as to a "Suite du Curé de Village") was introduced. This history ceased at the crisis of her life; and when it was taken up in a third part, called "Véronique au Tombeau," only the present conclusion of the book, with her confession, was given. The long account of her sojourn at Montégnac, of her labors there, of the episode of Farrabesche, and so forth, did not appear till 1841, when the whole book, with the inversions and insertions just indicated, appeared in such a changed form that even the indefatigable M. de Lovenjoul dismisses as "impossible" the idea of exhibiting a complete picture of the various changes made. Nor was the author even yet contented; for in 1845, before establishing it in its

place in the "Comédie," he not only, as was his wont, took out the chapter-headings, leaving five divisions only, but introduced other alterations, resulting in the present condition of the book.

As the book stands it may be said to consist of three parts united rather by identity of the personages who act in them than by exact dramatic connection. There is, to take the title-part first (though it is by no means the most really important or pervading) the picture of "The Country Parson," which is almost an exact, and beyond doubt a designed, pendant to that of "The Country Doctor." The Abbé Bonnet indeed is not able to carry out economic ameliorations, as Dr. Benassis is, personally, but by inducing Véronique to do so he brings about the same result, and on an even larger scale. His personal action (with the necessary changes for his profession) is also tolerably identical, and on the whole the two portraits may fairly be hung together as Balzac's ideal representations of the good man in soul-curing and body-curing respectively. Both are largely conditioned by his eighteenth century fancy for "playing Providence," and by his delight in extensive financial-commercial schemes. But the beauty of the portraiture of the "Curé" is nearly, if not quite equal, to that of the doctor, though the institution of celibacy has prevented Balzac from giving a key to the conduct of Bonnet quite as sufficient as that which he furnished for the conduct of Benassis.

The second part of the book is the crime—episodic as regards the criminal, cardinal as regards other points—of Tascheron. Balzac was very fond of "his crimes;" and it is quite worth while in connection with his handling of the murder here to study the curious story of his actual interference in the famous Peytel case, which also interested Thackeray so much in his Paris days. The Tascheron case itself (which from a note appears to have been partly suggested by some actual affair) no doubt has interests for those who like such

things, and the picture of the criminal in prison is very striking. But we see and know so very little of Tascheron himself, and even to the very last (which is long afterwards) we are left so much in the dark as to his love for Véronique, that the thing has an extraneous air. It is like a short story foisted in.

This objection connects itself at once with a similar one to the delineation of Véronique. There is nothing in her conduct intrinsically impossible, or even improbable. A girl of her temperament, at once, as often happens, strongly sensual and strongly devotional, deprived of her good looks by illness, thrown into the arms of a husband physically repulsive, and after a short time not troubling himself to be amiable in any other way, might very well take refuge in the substantial, if not ennobling, consolations offered by a good-looking and amiable young fellow of the lower class. Her conduct at the time of the crime (her exact complicity in which is, as we have said, rather imperfectly indicated) is also fairly probable, and to her repentance and amendment of life no exception can be taken. But only in this last stage do we really *see* anything of the inside of Véronique's nature; and even then we do not see it completely. The author's silence on the details of the actual *liaison* with Tascheron has its advantages, but it also has its defects.

Still, the book is one of great attraction and interest, and takes, if I may judge by my own experience, a high rank for enchaining power among that class of Balzac's books which cannot be put exactly highest. If the changes made in it by its author have to some extent dislocated it as a whole, they have resulted in very high excellence for almost all the parts.

As something has necessarily been said already about the book-history of the "Country Parson," little remains but to give exact dates and places of appearance. The *Presse* published the (original) first part in December–January, 1838–39, the original second ("Véronique") six months later, and the

third ("Véronique au Tombeau") in August. All had chapters and chapter-titles. As a book it was in its first complete form published by Souverain in 1841, and was again altered when it took rank in the "Comédie" six years later.

"Albert Savaron," with its enshrined story of "L'Ambitieux par Amour" (something of an oddity for Balzac, who often puts a story within a story, but less formally than this) contains various appeals, and shows not a few of its author's well-known interests in politics, in affairs, in newspapers, not to mention the enumerations of *dots* and fortunes which he never could refuse himself. The affection of Savaron for the Duchesse d'Argaiolo may interest different persons differently. It seems to me a little *fade*. But the character of Rosalie de Watteville is in a very different rank. Here only, except, perhaps, in the case of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose unlucky experiences had emancipated her, has Balzac depicted a girl full of character, individuality, and life. It was apparently necessary that Rosalie should be made not wholly amiable in order to obtain this accession of wits and force, and to be freed from the fatal gift of *candeur*, the curse of the French *ingénue*. Her creator has also thought proper to punish her further, and cruelly, at the end of the book. Nevertheless, though her story may be less interesting than either of theirs, it is impossible not to put her in a much higher rank as a heroine than either Eugénie or Ursule, and not to wish that Balzac had included the conception of her in a more important structure of fiction.

Albert Savaron appeared in sixty headed chapters in the *Siècle* for May and June, 1842, and then assumed its place in the "Comédie." But though left there, it also formed part of a two-volume issue by Souverain in 1844, in company with "La Muse du Department." "Rosalie" was at first named "Philomène."

G. S.

THE COUNTRY PARSON.

(*Le Curé de Village.*)

I.

VÉRONIQUE.

At the lower end of Limoges, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Poste and the Rue de la Cité, there stood, some thirty years back, an old-fashioned shop of the kind that seems to have changed in nothing since the middle ages. The great stone paving-slabs, riven with countless cracks, were laid upon the earth; the damp oozed up through them here and there; while the heights and hollows of this primitive flooring would have tripped up those who were not careful to observe them. Through the dust on the walls it was possible to discern a sort of mosaic of timber and bricks, iron and stone, a heterogeneous mass which owed its compact solidity to time, and perhaps to chance. For more than two centuries the huge rafters of the ceiling had bent without breaking beneath the weight of the upper stories, which were constructed of wooden framework, protected from the weather by slates arranged in a geometrical pattern; altogether, it was a quaint example of a burgess' house in olden times. Once there had been carved figures on the wooden window-frames, but sun and rain had destroyed the ornaments, and the windows themselves stood all awry; some bent outwards, some bent in, yet others were minded to part company, and one and all carried a little soil deposited (it would be hard to say how) in crannies hollowed by the rain, where a few shy creeping plants and thin weeds grew to break into meagre blossom

in the spring. Velvet mosses covered the roof and the window-sills.

The pillar which supported the corner of the house, built though it was of composite masonry, that is to say, partly of stone, partly of brick and flints, was alarming to behold by reason of its curvature; it looked as though it must give way some day beneath the weight of the superstructure whose gable projected fully six inches. For which reason the local authorities and the board of works bought the house and pulled it down to widen the street. The venerable corner pillar had its charms for lovers of old Limoges; it carried a pretty sculptured shrine and a mutilated image of the Virgin, broken during the Revolution. Citizens of an archæological turn could discover traces of the stone sill meant to hold candlesticks and to receive wax-tapers and flowers and votive offerings of the pious.

Within the shop a wooden staircase at the further end gave access to the two floors above and to the attics in the roof. The house itself, packed in between two neighboring dwellings, had little depth from back to front, and no light save from the windows which gave upon the street, the two rooms on each floor having a window apiece, one looking out into the Rue de la Vieille-Poste and the other into the Rue de la Cité. In the middle ages no artisan was better housed. The old corner shop must surely have belonged to some armorer or cutler, or master of some craft which could be carried on in the open air, for it was impossible for its inmates to see until the heavily-ironed shutters were taken down and air as well as light freely admitted. There were two doors (as is usually the case where a shop faces into two streets), one on either side the pillar. But for the interruption of the white threshold stones, hollowed by the wear of centuries, the whole shop front consisted of a low wall which rose to elbow height. Along the top of this wall a groove had been contrived, and a similar groove ran the length of the beam above, which sup-

ported the weight of the house wall. Into these grooves slid the heavy shutters, secured by huge iron bolts and bars ; and when the doorways had been made fast in like manner, the artisan's workshop was as good as a fortress.

For the first twenty years of this present century the Limousins had been accustomed to see the interior filled up with old iron and brass, cart-springs, tires, bells, and every sort of metal from the demolition of houses ; but the curious in the *débris* of the old town discovered, on a closer inspection, the traces of a forge in the place and a long streak of soot, signs which confirmed the guesses of archæologists as to the original purpose of the dwelling. On the second floor there was a living room and a kitchen, two more rooms on the third, and an attic in the roof, which was used as a warehouse for goods more fragile than the hardware tumbled down pell-mell in the shop.

The house had been first let and then sold to one Sauviat, a hawker, who from 1792 till 1796 traveled in Auvergne for a distance of fifty leagues round, bartering pots, plates, dishes, and glasses, all the gear, in fact, needed by the poorest cottagers, for old iron, brass, lead, and metal of every sort and description. The Auvergnat would give a brown earthen pipkin worth a couple of sous for a pound weight of lead or a couple of pounds of iron, a broken spade or hoe, or an old cracked saucepan ; and was always judge in his own cause, and gave his own weights. In three years' time Sauviat took another trade in addition, and became a tinman.

In 1793 he was able to buy a château put up for sale by the nation. This he pulled down ; and doubtless repeated a profitable experiment at more than one point in his sphere of operations. After a while these first essays of his gave him an idea ; he suggested a piece of business on a large scale to a fellow-countryman in Paris ; and so it befell that the Black Band, so notorious for the havoc which it wrought among old buildings, was a sprout of old Sauviat's brain, the invention

of the hawker whom all Limoges had seen for seven-and-twenty years in his tumble-down shop among his broken bells, flails, chains, brackets, twisted leaden gutters, and heterogeneous old iron. In justice to Sauviat, it should be said that he never knew how large and how notorious the association became; he only profited by it to the extent of the capital which he invested with the famous firm of Brézac.

At last the Auvergnat grew tired of roaming from fair to fair and place to place, and settled down in Limoges, where, in 1797, he had married a wife, the motherless daughter of a tinman, Champagnac by name. When the father-in-law died, he bought the house in which he had, in a manner, localized his trade in old iron, though for some three years after his marriage he had still made his rounds, his wife accompanying him. Sauviat had completed his fiftieth year when he married old Champagnac's daughter, and the bride herself was certainly thirty years old at the least. Champagnac's girl was neither pretty nor blooming. She was born in Auvergne, and the dialect was a mutual attraction; she was, moreover, of the heavy build which enables a woman to stand the roughest work; so she went with Sauviat on his rounds, carried loads of lead and iron on her back, and drove the sorry carrier's van full of the pottery on which her husband made usurious profits, little as his customers imagined it. La Champagnac was sunburned and high-colored. She enjoyed rude health, exhibiting when she laughed a row of teeth large and white as blanched almonds, and, as to physique, possessed the bust and hips of a woman destined by nature to be a mother. Her prolonged spinsterhood was entirely due to her father; he had not read Molière, but he raised Harpagon's cry of "Without portion!" scaring suitors. The "*Sans dot*" did not frighten Sauviat away; he was not averse to receiving the bride without a portion; in the first place, a would-be bridegroom of fifty ought not to raise difficulties; and, in the second, his wife saved him the expense of a servant. He added

nothing to the furniture of his room. On his wedding-day it contained a four-post bedstead hung with green serge curtains and a valance with a scalloped edge; a dresser, a chest of drawers, four easy-chairs, a table, and a looking-glass, all bought at different times and from different places; and till he left the old house for good, the list remained the same. On the upper shelves of the dresser stood sundry pewter plates and dishes, no two of them alike. After this description of the bedroom, the kitchen may be left to the reader's imagination.

Neither husband nor wife could read, a slight defect of education which did not prevent them from reckoning money to admiration, nor from carrying on one of the most prosperous of all trades, for Sauviat never bought anything unless he felt sure of making a hundred per cent. on the transaction, and dispensed with bookkeeping and counting-house by carrying on a ready-money business. He possessed, moreover, a faculty of memory so perfect that an article might remain for five years in his shop, and at the end of the time both he and his wife could recollect the price they gave for it to a farthing, together with the added interest for every year since the outlay.

Sauviat's wife, when she was not busy about the house, always sat on a rickety wooden chair in her shop-door beside the pillar, knitting, and watching the passers-by, keeping an eye on the old iron, and selling, weighing, and delivering it herself if Sauviat was out on one of his journeys. At daybreak you might hear the dealer in old iron taking down the shutters, the dog was let loose into the street, and very soon Sauviat's wife came down to help her husband to arrange their wares. Against the low wall of the shop in the Rue de la Cité and the Rue de la Vieille-Poste, they propped their heterogeneous collection of broken gun-barrels, cart springs, and harness bells—all the gimcracks, in short, which served as a trade sign and gave a sufficiently poverty-stricken look to a

shop which in reality often contained twenty thousand francs worth of lead, steel, and bell metal. The retired hawker and his wife never spoke of their money; they hid it as a malefactor conceals a crime, and for a long while were suspected of clipping gold louis and silver crowns.

When old Champagnac died, the Sauviats made no inventory. They searched every corner and cranny of the old man's house with the quickness of rats, stripped it bare as a corpse, and sold the tinware themselves in their own shop. Once every year, when December came round, Sauviat would go to Paris, traveling in a public conveyance; from which premises, observers in the quarter concluded that the dealer in old iron saw to his investments in Paris himself, so that he might keep the amount of his money a secret. It came out in after years that as a lad Sauviat had known one of the most celebrated metal merchants in Paris, a fellow-countryman from Auvergne, and that Sauviat's savings were invested with the prosperous firm of Brézac, the corner-stone of the famous association of the Black Band, which was started, as has been said, by Sauviat's advice, and in which he held shares.

Sauviat was short and stout. He had a weary-looking face and an honest expression, which attracted customers, and was of no little use to him in the matter of sales. The dryness of his affirmations, and the perfect indifference of his manner, aided his pretensions. It was not easy to guess the color of the skin beneath the black metallic grime which covered his curly hair and countenance seamed with the smallpox. His forehead was not without a certain nobility; indeed, he resembled the traditional type chosen by painters for Saint Peter, the man of the people among the apostles, the roughest among their number, and likewise the shrewdest; Sauviat had the hands of an indefatigable worker, rifted by ineffaceable cracks, square-shaped, and coarse and large. The muscular framework of his chest seemed indestructible. All through his life he dressed like a hawker, wearing the thick iron-bound

shoes, the blue stockings which his wife knitted for him, the leather gaiters, breeches of bottle-green velveteen, a coat with short skirts of the same material, and a flapped waistcoat, where the copper key of a silver watch dangled from an iron chain, worn by constant friction till it shone like polished steel. Round his neck he wore a cotton handkerchief, frayed by the constant rubbing of his beard. On Sundays and holidays he appeared in a maroon overcoat so carefully kept that he bought a new one but twice in a score of years.

As for their manner of living, the convicts in the hulks might be said to fare sumptuously in comparison; it was a day of high festival indeed when they ate meat. Before La Sauviat could bring herself to part with the money needed for their daily sustenance, she rummaged through the two pockets under her skirt, and never drew forth coin that was not clipped or light weight, eyeing the crowns of six livres and fifty-sous pieces dolorously before she changed one of them. The Sauviats contented themselves, for the most part, with herrings, dried peas, cheese, hard-boiled eggs and salad, and vegetables dressed in the cheapest way. They lived from hand to mouth, laying in nothing except a bundle of garlic now and again, or a rope of onions, which could not spoil, and cost them a mere trifle. As for firewood, La Sauviat bought the few sticks which they required in winter of the faggot-sellers day by day. By seven o'clock in winter and nine in summer the shutters were fastened, the master and mistress in bed, and their huge dog, who picked up his living in the kitchens of the quarter, on guard in the shop; Mother Sauviat did not spend three francs a year on candles.

A joy came into their sober hard-working lives; it was a joy that came in the natural order of things, and caused the only outlay which they had been known to make. In May, 1802, La Sauviat bore a daughter. No one was called in to her assistance, and five days later she was stirring about her house again. She nursed her child herself, sitting on the chair in

the doorway, selling her wares as usual, with the baby at her breast. Her milk cost nothing, so for two years she suckled the little one, who was none the worse for it, for little Véronique grew to be the prettiest child in the lower town, so pretty indeed that passers-by would stop to look at her. The neighbors saw in old Sauviat traces of a tenderness of which they had believed him incapable. While the wife made the dinner ready he used to rock the little one in his arms, crooning the refrain of some Auvergnat song; and the workmen as they passed sometimes saw him sitting motionless, gazing at little Véronique asleep on her mother's knee. His gruff voice grew gentle for the child; he would wipe his hands on his trousers before taking her up. When Véronique was learning to walk, her father squatted on his heels four paces away, holding out his arms to her, gleeful smiles puckering the deep wrinkles on the harsh, stern face of bronze; it seemed as if the man of iron, brass, and lead had once more become flesh and blood. As he stood leaning against the pillar motionless as a statue, he would start at a cry from Véronique, and spring over the iron to find her, for she spent her childhood in playing about among the metallic spoils of old châteaux heaped up in the recesses of the shop, and never hurt herself; and if she played in the street or with the neighbors' children, she was never allowed out of her mother's sight.

It is worth while to add that the Sauviats were eminently devout. Even when the Revolution was at its height Sauviat kept Sundays and holidays punctually. Twice in those days he had all but lost his head for going to hear mass said by a priest who had not taken the oath to the Republic. He found himself in prison at last, justly accused of conniving at the escape of a bishop whose life he had saved; but luckily for the hawker, steel files and iron bars were old acquaintances of his, and he made his escape. Whereupon the court finding that he failed to put in an appearance, gave judgment by default, and condemned him to death; and it may be added

that, as he never returned to clear himself, he finally died under sentence of death. In his religious sentiments his wife shared; the parsimonious rule of the household was only relaxed in the name of religion. Punctually the two paid their quota for sacramental bread, and gave money for charity. If the curate of Saint-Étienne came to ask for alms, Sauviat or his wife gave without fuss or hesitation what they believed to be their due share towards the funds of the parish. The broken Virgin on their pillar was decked with sprays of box when Easter came round; and so long as there were flowers, the passers-by saw that the blue-glass bouquet-holders were never empty, and this especially after Véronique's birth. Whenever there was a procession the Sauviats never failed to drape their house with hangings and garlands, and contributed to the erection and adornment of the altar—the pride of their street.

So Véronique was brought up in the Christian faith. As soon as she was seven years old she was educated by a gray sister, an Auvergnate, to whom the Sauviats had rendered some little service; for both of them were sufficiently obliging so long as their time or their substance was not in question, and helpful after the manner of the poor, who lend themselves with a certain heartiness. It was the Franciscan sister who taught Véronique to read and write; she instructed her pupil in the History of the People of God, in the Catechism and the Old and New Testaments, and, to a certain small extent, in the rules of arithmetic. That was all. The good sister thought that it would be enough, but even this was too much.

Véronique at nine years of age astonished the quarter by her beauty. Every one admired a face which might one day be worthy of the pencil of some impassioned seeker after an ideal type. "The little Virgin," as they called her, gave promise of being graceful of form and fair of face; the thick, bright hair which set off the delicate outlines of her features completed her resemblance to the Madonna. Those who have

seen the divine child-virgin in Titian's great picture of the Presentation in the Temple may know what Véronique was like in these years; she had the same frank innocence of expression, the same look as of a wondering seraph in her eyes, the same noble simplicity, the same queenly bearing.

Two years later, Véronique fell ill of the smallpox, and would have died of it but for Sister Martha, who nursed her. During those two months, while her life was in danger, the quarter learned how tenderly the Sauviats loved their daughter. Sauviat attended no sales and went nowhere. All day long he stayed in the shop, or went restlessly up and down the stairs, and he and his wife sat up night after night with the child. So deep was his dumb grief that no one dared to speak to him; the neighbors watched him pityingly, and asked for news of Véronique of no one but Sister Martha. The days came when the child's life hung by a thread, and neighbors and passers-by saw, for the first and only time in Sauviat's life, the slow tears rising under his eyelids and rolling down his hollow cheeks. He never wiped them away. For hours he sat like one stupefied, not daring to go upstairs to the sick-room, staring before him with unseeing eyes; he might have been robbed, and he would not have noticed it.

Véronique's life was saved, not so her beauty. A uniform tint, in which red and brown were evenly blended, overspread her face; the disease left countless little scars which coarsened the surface of the skin, and wrought havoc with the delicate underlying tissues. Nor had her forehead escaped the ravages of the scourge; it was brown, and covered with dints like the marks of hammer-strokes. No combination is more discordant than a muddy-brown complexion and fair hair; the pre-established harmony of coloring is broken. Deep irregular seams in the surface had spoiled the purity of her features and the delicacy of the outlines of her face; the Grecian profile, the subtle curves of a chin finely moulded as white porcelain, were scarcely discernible between the coars-

ened skin ; the disease had only spared what it was powerless to injure—the teeth and eyes. But Véronique did not lose her grace and beauty of form, the full rounded curves of her figure, nor the slenderness of her waist. At fifteen she was a graceful girl, and (for the comfort of the Sauviats) a good girl and devout, hard-working, industrious, always at home.

After her convalescence and first communion, her father and mother arranged for her the two rooms on the third floor. Some glimmering notion of what is meant by comfort passed through old Sauviat's mind ; hard fare might do for him and his wife, but now a dim idea of making compensation for a loss which his daughter had not felt as yet crossed his brain. Véronique had lost the beauty of which these two had been so proud, and thenceforward became the dearer to them and the more precious in their eyes.

So one day Sauviat came in, carrying a carpet, a chance purchase, on his back, and this he himself nailed down on the floor of Véronique's room. He went to a sale of furniture at a château and secured for her the red damask-curtained bed of some great lady, and hangings and chairs and easy-chairs covered with the same stuff. Gradually he furnished his daughter's rooms with second-hand purchases, in complete ignorance of the real value of the things. He set pots of mignonette on the window-sill, and brought back flowers for her from his wanderings ; sometimes it was a rosebush, sometimes a tree-carnation, and plants of all kinds, doubtless given to him by gardeners and innkeepers. If Véronique had known enough of other people to draw comparisons, and to understand their manners of life and the characters and the ignorance of her parents, she would have known how great the affection was which showed itself in these little things ; but the girl gave her father and mother the love that springs from an exquisite nature—an instinctive and unreasoning love.

Véronique must have the finest linen which her mother

could buy, and La Sauviat allowed her daughter to choose her own dresses. Both father and mother were pleased with her moderation; Véronique had no ruinous tastes. A blue-silk gown for holiday wear, a winter dress of coarse merino for working-days, and a striped cotton gown in summer; with these she was content.

On Sunday she went to mass with her father and mother, and walked with them after vespers along the banks of the Vienne or in the neighborhood of the town. All through the week she stayed in the house, busy over the tapestry-work, which was sold for the benefit of the poor, or the plain sewing for the hospital—no life could be more simple, more innocent, more exemplary than hers. She had other occupations beside her sewing; she read to herself, but only such books as the curate of Saint-Étienne loaned to her. (Sister Martha had introduced the priest to the Sauviat family.)

For Véronique all the laws of the household economy were set aside. Her mother delighted to cook dainty fare for her, and made separate dishes for her daughter. Father and mother might continue, as before, to eat the walnuts and the hard bread, the herrings, and the dried peas fried with a little salt butter; but for Véronique, nothing was fresh enough nor good enough.

"Véronique must be a great expense to you," remarked the hatter who lived opposite. He estimated old Sauviat's fortune at a hundred thousand francs, and had thoughts of Véronique for his son.

"Yes, neighbor; yes, neighbor; yes," old Sauviat answered, "she might ask me for ten crowns, and I should let her have them, I should. She has everything she wants, but she never asks for anything. She is as good and gentle as a lamb!"

And, in fact, Véronique did not know the price of anything; she had no wants; she never saw a piece of gold till the day of her marriage, and had no money of her own; her

mother bought and gave to her all that she wished, and even for a beggar she drew upon her mother's pockets.

"Then she doesn't cost you much," commented the hatter.

"That is what you think, is it?" retorted Sauviat. "You wouldn't do it on less than forty crowns a year. You should see her room! There is a hundred crowns' worth of furniture in it; but when you have only one girl, you can indulge yourself; and, after all, what little we have will all be hers some day."

"*Little?* You must be rich, Father Sauviat. These forty years you have been in a line of business where there are no losses."

"Oh, they shouldn't cut my ears off for a matter of twelve hundred francs," said the dealer in old iron.

From the day when Véronique lost the delicate beauty which every one had admired in her childish face, old Sauviat had worked twice as hard as before. His business revived again, and prospered so well, that he went to Paris not once, but several times a year. People guessed his motives. If his girl had gone off in looks, he would make up for it in money, to use his own language.

When Véronique was about fifteen another change was wrought in the household ways. The father and mother went up to their daughter's room of an evening, and listened while she read aloud to them from the "Lives of the Saints," or the "Lettres édifiantes," or from some other book loaned by the curate of Saint-Étienne. The lamp was set behind a glass globe full of water, and Mother Sauviat knitted industriously, thinking in this way to pay for the oil. The neighbors opposite could look into the room and see the two old people sitting there, motionless as two carved Chinese figures, listening intently, admiring their daughter with all the power of an intelligence that was dim enough save in matters of business or religion. Doubtless there have been girls as pure as Véronique—there have been none purer nor more modest.

Her confession surely filled the angels with wonder, and gladdened the Virgin in heaven. She was now sixteen years old, and perfectly developed; you beheld in her the woman she would be. She was a medium height, neither the father nor the mother was tall; but the most striking thing about her figure was its lissome grace, the sinuous, gracious curves which nature herself traces so finely, which the artist strives so painfully to render; the soft contours that reveal themselves to practiced eyes, for in spite of folds of linen and thickness of stuff, the dress is always moulded and informed by the body. Simple, natural and sincere, Véronique set this physical beauty in relief by her unaffected freedom of movement. She produced her "full and entire effect," if it is permissible to make use of the forcible legal phrase. She had the full-fleshed arms of an Auvergnate, the red, plump hands of a buxom inn-servant, and feet strongly made, but shapely, and in proportion to her height.

Sometimes there was wrought in her an exquisite mysterious change; suddenly it was revealed that in this frame dwelt a woman hidden from all eyes but Love's. Perhaps it was this transfiguration which awakened an admiration of her beauty in the father and mother, who astonished the neighbors by speaking of it as something divine. The first to see it were the clergy of the cathedral and the communicants at the table of the Lord. When Véronique's face was lighted up by impassioned feeling—and the mystical ecstasy which filled her at such times is one of the strongest emotions in the life of so innocent a girl—it seemed as if a bright inner radiance effaced the traces of the smallpox, and the pure, bright face appeared once more in the first beauty of childhood. Scarcely obscured by the thin veil of tissues coarsened by the disease, her face shone like some flower in dim places under the sea, when the sunlight strikes down and invests it with a mysterious glory. For a few brief moments Véronique was transfigured, the little Virgin appeared and disappeared like

a vision from heaven. The pupils of her eyes, which possessed in a high degree the power of contracting, seemed at such seasons to dilate and overspread the blue of the iris, which diminished till it became nothing more than a slender ring; the change in the eyes, which thus grew piercing as the eagle's, completing the wonderful change in the face. Was it a storm of repressed and passionate longing, was it some power which had its source in the depths of her nature, which made those eyes dilate in broad daylight as other eyes widen in shadow, darkening their heavenly blue? Whatever the cause, it was impossible to look upon Véronique with indifference as she returned to her place after having been made one with God; all present beheld her in the radiance of her early beauty; at such times she would have eclipsed the fairest woman in her loveliness. What a charm for a jealous lover in that veil of flesh which should hide his love from all other eyes; a veil which the hand of love could raise to let fall again upon the rapture of wedded bliss. Véronique's lips, faultless in their curves, seemed to have been painted scarlet, so richly were they colored by the pure glow of the blood. Her chin and the lower part of her face were a little full, in the sense that painters give to the word, and this heaviness of contour is, by the unalterable laws of physiognomy, a certain sign of a capacity for almost morbid violence of passion. Her finely-moulded but almost imperious brow was crowned by a glorious diadem of thick abundant hair; the gold had deepened to a chestnut tint.

From her sixteenth year till the day of her marriage Véronique's demeanor was thoughtful and full of melancholy. In an existence so lonely she fell, as solitary souls are wont, to watching the grand spectacle of the life within, the progress of her thoughts, the ever-changing phantasmagoria of mental visions, the yearnings kindled by her pure life. Those who passed along the Rue de la Cité on sunny days had only to look up to see the Sauviats' girl sitting at her window with

a bit of sewing or embroidery in her hand, drawing the needle in and out with a somewhat dreamy air. Her head stood out in sharp contrast against its background among the flowers which gave a touch of poetry to the prosaic, cracked, brown window-sill, and the small leaded panes of her casement. At times a reflected glow from the red damask curtains added to the effect of the face so brightly colored already; it looked like some rosy-red flower above the little skyey garden, which she tended so carefully upon the ledge. So the quaint old house contained something still more quaint—a portrait of a young girl, worthy of Mieris, Van Ostade, Terburg, or Gerard Dow, framed in one of the old, worn, and blackened, and almost ruinous windows which Dutch artists loved to paint. If a stranger happened to glance up at the second floor, and stand agape with wonder at its construction, old Sauviat below would thrust out his head till he could look up the face of the overhanging story. He was sure to see Véronique there at the window. Then he would go in again, rubbing his hands, and say to his wife in the patois of Auvergne:

"Hullo, old woman, there is some one admiring your daughter!"

In 1820 an event occurred in Véronique's simple and uneventful life. It was a little thing, which would have exercised no influence upon another girl, but destined to effect a fatal influence on Véronique's future life. On the day of a suppressed church festival, a working-day for the rest of the town, the Sauviats shut their shop and went first to mass and then for a walk. On their way into the country they passed by a bookseller's shop, and among the books displayed outside Véronique saw one called *Paul et Virginie*. The fancy took her to buy it for the sake of the engraving; her father paid five francs for the fatal volume, and slipped it into the vast pocket of his overcoat.

"Wouldn't it be better to show it to M. le Vicaire?"

asked the mother; for her any printed book was something of an abracadabra, which might or might not be for evil.

"Yes, I thought I would," Véronique answered simply.

She spent that night in reading the book, one of the most touching romances in the French language. The love scenes, half-biblical, and worthy of the early ages of the world, wrought havoc in Véronique's heart. A hand, whether diabolical or divine, had raised for her the veil which hitherto had covered nature. On the morrow the little Virgin within the beautiful girl thought her flowers fairer than on the evening of the day before; she understood their symbolical language, she gazed up at the blue sky with exaltation, causeless tears rose to her eyes.

In every woman's life there comes a moment when she understands her destiny, or her organization, hitherto mute, speaks with authority. It is not always a man singled out by an involuntary and stolen glance who reveals the possession of a sixth sense, hitherto dormant; more frequently it is some sight that comes with the force of a surprise, a landscape, a page of a book, some day of high pomp, some ceremony of the Church; the scent of growing flowers, the delicate brightness of a misty morning, the intimate sweetness of divine music—and something suddenly stirs in body or soul. For the lonely child, a prisoner in the dark house, brought up by parents almost as rough and simple as peasants; for the girl who had never heard an improper word, whose innocent mind had never received the slightest taint of evil; for the angelic pupil of Sister Martha and of the good curate of Saint-Étienne, the revelation of love came through a charming book from the hand of genius. No peril would have lurked in it for any other, but for her an obscene work would have been less dangerous. Corruption is relative. There are lofty and virginal natures which a single thought suffices to corrupt, a thought which works the more ruin because the necessity of combating it is not foreseen.

The next day Véronique showed her book to the good priest, who approved the purchase of a work so widely known for its childlike innocence and purity. But the heat of the tropics, the beauty of the land described in *Paul et Virginie*, the almost childish innocence of a love scarcely of this earth, had wrought upon Véronique's imagination. She was captivated by the noble and sweet personality of the author, and carried away towards the cult of the ideal, that fatal religion. She dreamed of a lover, a young man like Paul, and brooded over soft imaginings of that life of lovers in some fragrant island. Below Limoges, and almost opposite the Faubourg Saint-Martial, there is a little island in the Vienne; this, in her childish fancy, Véronique called the Isle of France, and, filled with the fantastic creations of a young girl's dreams, vague shadows endowed with the dreamer's own perfections.

She sat more than ever in the window in those days, and watched the workmen as they came and went. Her parents' humble position forbade her to think of any one but an artisan; yet, accustomed as she doubtless was to the idea of becoming a workingman's wife, she was conscious of an instinctive refinement which shrank from anything rough or coarse. So she began to weave for herself a romance such as most girls weave in their secret hearts for themselves alone. With the enthusiasm which might be expected of a refined and girlish imagination, she seized on the attractive idea of ennobling one of these workingmen, of raising him to the level of her dreams. She made (who knows?) a Paul of some young man whose face she saw in the street, simply that she might attach her wild fancies to some human creature, as the overcharged atmosphere of a winter day deposits dew on the branches of a tree by the wayside, for the frost to transform into magical crystals. How should she escape a fall into the depths? for if she often seemed to return to earth from far-off heights with a reflected glory about her brows, yet oftener she appeared to bring with her flowers gathered on the brink of a

torrent-stream which she had followed down into the abyss. On warm evenings she asked her old father to walk out with her, and never lost an opportunity of a stroll by the Vienne. She went into ecstasy at every step over the beauty of the sky and land, over the red glories of the sunset, or the joyous freshness of dewy mornings, and the sense of these things, the poetry of nature, passed into her soul.

She curled and waved the hair which she used to wear in simple plaits about her head; she thought more about her dress. The young, wild vine which had grown as its nature prompted about the old elm tree was transplanted and trimmed and pruned, and grew upon a dainty green trellis.

One evening in December, 1822, when Sauviat (now seventy years old) had returned from a journey to Paris, the curate dropped in, and after a few commonplaces—

"You must think of marrying your daughter, Sauviat," said the priest. "At your age you should no longer delay the fulfillment of an important duty."

"Why, has Véronique a mind to be married?" asked the amazed old man.

"As you please, father," the girl answered, lowering her eyes.

"We will marry her," cried portly Mother Sauviat, smiling as she spoke.

"Why didn't you say something about this before I left home, mother?" Sauviat asked. "I shall have to go back to Paris again."

In Jerome-Baptiste Sauviat's eyes plenty of money appeared to be synonymous with happiness. He had always regarded love and marriage in their purely physical and practical aspects; marriage was a means of transmitting his property (he being no more) to another self; so he vowed that Véronique should marry a well-to-do man. Indeed, for a long while past this had become a fixed idea with him. His neighbor the hatter, who was retiring from business, and had an income

of two thousand livres a year, had already asked for Véronique for his son and successor (for Véronique was spoken of in the quarter as a good girl of exemplary life), and had been politely refused. Sauviat had not so much as mentioned this to Véronique.

The curate was Véronique's director, and a great man in the Sauviats' eyes; so the day after he had spoken of Véronique's marriage as a necessity, old Sauviat shaved himself, put on his Sunday clothes, and went out. He said not a word to his wife and daughter, but the women knew that the old man had gone out to find a son-in-law. Sauviat went to M. Graslin.

M. Graslin, a rich banker of Limoges, had left his native Auvergne, like Sauviat himself, without a sou in his pocket. He had begun life as a porter in a banker's service, and from that position had made his way, like many another capitalist, partly by thrift, partly by sheer luck. A cashier at five-and-twenty, and at five-and thirty a partner in the firm of Perret & Grossetête, he at last bought out the original partners, and became sole owner of the bank. His two colleagues went to live in the country, leaving their capital in his hands at a low rate of interest. Pierre Graslin, at the age of forty-seven, was believed to possess six hundred thousand francs at the least. His reputation for riches had recently increased, and the whole department had applauded his free-handedness when he built a house for himself in the new quarter of the Place des Arbres, which adds not a little to the appearance of Limoges. It was a handsome house, on the plan of alignment, with a façade like a neighboring public building; but though the mansion had been finished for six months, Pierre Graslin hesitated to furnish it. His house had cost him so dear, that at the thought of living in it he drew back. Self-love, it may be, had enticed him to exceed the limits he had prudently observed all his life long; he thought, moreover, with the plain sense of a man of business, that it was only right that the inside of his house should be in keeping with

the programme adopted with the façade. The plate and furniture and accessories needed for the housekeeping in such a mansion would cost more, according to his computations, than the actual outlay on the building. So, in spite of the town gossip, the broad grins of commercial circles, and the charitable surmises of his neighbors, Pierre Graslin stayed where he was on the damp and dirty ground-floor dwelling in the Rue Montantmanigne, where his fortune had been made, and the great house stood empty. People might talk, but Graslin was happy in the approbation of his two old sleeping partners, who praised him for displaying such uncommon strength of mind.

Such a fortune and such a life as Graslin's is sure to excite plentiful covetousness in a country town. During the past ten years more than one proposition of marriage had been skillfully insinuated. But the estate of a bachelor was eminently suited to a man who worked from morning to night, overwhelmed with business, and wearied by his daily round, a man as keen after money as a sportsman after game; so Graslin had fallen into none of the snares set for him by ambitious mothers who coveted a brilliant position for their daughters. Graslin, the Sauviat of a somewhat higher social sphere, did not spend two francs a day upon himself, and dressed no better than his second clerk. His whole staff consisted of a couple of clerks and an office boy, though he went through an amount of business which might fairly be called immense, so multitudinous were its ramifications. One of the clerks saw to the correspondence, the other kept the books; and for the rest Pierre Graslin was both the soul and body of his business. He chose his clerks from his family circle; they were of his own stamp, trustworthy, intelligent, and accustomed to work. As for the office boy, he led the life of a dray horse.

Graslin rose all the year round before five in the morning, and was never in bed till eleven o'clock at night. His char-

woman, an old Auvergnate, who came in to do the housework and to cook his meals, had strict orders never to exceed the sum of three francs for the total daily expense of the household. The brown earthenware, the strong coarse tablecloths and sheets, were in keeping with the manners and customs of an establishment in which the porter was the man of all work, and the clerks made their own beds. The blackened deal tables, the ragged straw-bottomed chairs with the holes through the centre, the pigeon-hole writing-desks and ramshackle bedsteads, in fact, all the furniture of the counting-house and the three rooms above it, would not have brought three thousand francs, even if the safe had been included, a colossal solid iron structure built into the wall itself, before which the porter nightly slept with a couple of dogs at his feet. It had been a legacy from the old firm to the present one.

Graslin was not often seen in society, where a great deal was heard about him. He dined with the receiver-general (a business connection) two or three times a year, and he had been known to take a meal at the prefecture; for, to his own intense disgust, he had been nominated a member of the general council of the department. "He wasted his time there," he said. Occasionally, when he had concluded a bargain with a business acquaintance, he was detained to lunch or dinner; and, lastly, he was sometimes compelled to call upon his old partners, who spent the winter in Limoges. So slight was the hold which social relations had upon him that at twenty-five years of age Graslin had not so much as offered a glass of water to any creature.

People used to say, "That is M. Graslin!" when he passed along the street, which is to say, "There is a man who came to Limoges without a farthing, and has made an immense amount of money." The Auvergnat banker became a kind of pattern and example held up by fathers of families to their offspring—and an epigram which more than one wife cast in

her husband's teeth. It is easy to imagine the motives which induced this principal pivot in the financial machinery of Limoges to repel the matrimonial advances so perseveringly made to him. The daughters of Messieurs Perret and Grossetête had been married before Graslin was in a position to ask for them; but as each of these ladies had daughters in the school-room, people let Graslin alone at last, taking it for granted that either old Perret or Grossetête the shrewd had arranged a match to be carried out some future day, when Graslin should be bridegroom to one of the granddaughters.

Sauviat had watched his fellow-countryman's rise and progress more closely than any one. He had known Graslin ever since he came to Limoges, but their relative positions had changed so much (in appearance at any rate) that the friendship became an acquaintance, renewed only at long intervals. Still, in his quality of fellow-countryman, Graslin was never above having a chat with Sauviat in the Auvergne dialect if the two happened to meet, and in their own language they dropped the formal "you" for the more familiar "thee" and "thou."

In 1823, when the youngest of the brothers Grossetête, the Receiver-General of Bourges, married his daughter to the youngest son of the Comte de Fontaine, Sauviat saw that the Grossetêtes had no mind to take Graslin into their family.

After a conference with the banker, old Sauviat returned in high glee to dine in his daughter's room.

"Véronique will be Madame Graslin," he told the two women.

"*Madame Graslin!*" cried Mother Sauviat, in amazement.

"Is it possible?" asked Véronique. She did not know Graslin by sight, but the name produced much such an effect on her imagination as the word Rothschild upon a Parisian shop-girl.

"Yes. It is settled," old Sauviat continued solemnly. "Graslin will furnish his house very grandly; he will have the

finest carriage from Paris that money can buy for our daughter, and the best pair of horses in Limousin. He will buy an estate worth five hundred thousand francs for her, and settle the house on her besides. In short, Véronique will be the first lady in Limoges, and the richest in the department, and can do just as she likes with Graslin."

Véronique's boundless affection for her father and mother, her bringing-up, her religious training, her utter ignorance, prevented her from raising a single objection; it did not so much as occur to her that she had been disposed of without her own consent. The next day Sauviat set out for Paris, and was away for about a week.

Pierre Graslin, as you may imagine, was no great talker; he went straight to the point, and acted promptly. A thing determined upon was a thing done at once. So in February, 1822, a strange piece of news surprised Limoges like a sudden thunderclap. Graslin's great house was being handsomely furnished. Heavy wagon-loads from Paris arrived daily to be unpacked in the courtyard. Rumors flew about the town concerning the good taste displayed in the beautiful furniture, modern and antique. A magnificent service of plate came down from Odiot's by the mail; and (actually) three carriages!—a calèche, a brougham, and a cabriolet—arrived carefully packed in straw as if they had been jewels.

"M. Graslin is going to be married!" The words passed from mouth to mouth, and in the course of a single evening the news filtered through the drawing-rooms of the Limousin aristocracy to the back parlors and shops in the suburbs, till all Limoges, in fact, had heard it. But whom was he going to marry? Nobody could answer the question. There was a mystery in Limoges.

As soon as Sauviat came back from Paris, Graslin made his first nocturnal visit, at half-past nine o'clock. Véronique knew that he was coming. She wore her blue-silk gown, cut square at the throat, and a wide collar of cambric with a

deep hem. Her hair she had simply parted into two bandeaux, waved and gathered into a Grecian knot at the back of her head. She was sitting in a tapestry-covered chair near the fireside, where her mother occupied a great armchair with a carved back and crimson velvet cushions, a bit of salvage from some ruined château. A blazing fire burned on the hearth. Upon the mantel-shelf, on either side of an old clock (whose value the Sauviats certainly did not know), stood two old-fashioned sconces; six wax-candles in the sockets among the brazen vine-stems shed their light on the brown chamber, and on Véronique in her bloom. The old mother had put on her best dress.

In the midst of the silence that reigned in the streets at that silent hour, with the dimly-lit staircase as a background, Graslin appeared for the first time before Véronique—the shy childish girl whose head was still full of sweet fancies of love derived from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's book. Graslin was short and thin. His thick black hair stood up straight on his forehead like bristles in a brush, in startling contrast with a face red as a drunkard's, and covered with suppurating or bleeding pustules. The eruption was neither scrofula nor leprosy, it was simply a result of an overheated condition of the blood; unflagging toil, anxiety, fanatical application to business, late hours, a life steady and sober to the point of abstemiousness, had induced a complaint which seemed to be related to both diseases. In spite of partners, clerks, and doctors, the banker had never brought himself to submit to a regimen which might have alleviated the symptoms or cured an evil, trifling at first, which was daily aggravated by neglect as time went on. He wished to be rid of it, and sometimes for a few days would take the baths and swallow the doses prescribed; but the round of business carried him away, and he forgot to take care of himself. Now and again he would talk of going away for a short holiday, and trying the waters somewhere or other for a cure, but where is the man in hot

pursuit of millions who has been known to stop? In this flushed countenance gleamed two gray eyes, the iris speckled with brown dots and streaked with fine green threads radiating from the pupil—two covetous eyes, piercing eyes that went to the depths of the heart, implacable eyes in which you read resolution and integrity and business faculty. A snub nose, thick blubber lips, a prominent rounded forehead, grinning cheek-bones, coarse ears corroded by the sour humors of the blood—altogether Graslin looked like an antique satyr —a satyr tricked out in a great coat, a black satin waistcoat, and a white neckcloth knotted about his neck. The strong muscular shoulders, which had once carried heavy burdens, stooped somewhat already; the thin legs, which seemed to be imperfectly jointed with the short thighs, trembled beneath the weight of that over-developed torso. The bony fingers covered with hair were like claws, as is often the case with those who tell gold all day long. Two parallel lines furrowed the face from the cheek-bones to the mouth—an unerring sign that here was a man whose whole soul was taken up with material interests; while the eyebrows sloped up towards the temples in a manner which indicated a habit of swift decision. Grim and hard though the mouth looked, there was something there that suggested an underlying kindliness, real good-heartedness, not called forth in a life of money-getting, and choked, it may be, by cares of this world, but which might revive at contact with a woman.

At the sight of this apparition, something clutched cruelly at Véronique's heart. Everything grew dark before her eyes. She thought she cried out, but in reality she sat still, mute, staring with fixed eyes.

"Véronique," said old Sauviat, "this is M. Graslin."

Véronique rose to her feet and bowed, then she sank down into her chair again, and her eyes sought her mother. But La Sauviat was smiling at the millionaire, looking so happy, so very happy, that the poor child gathered courage to hide

her violent feeling of repulsion and the shock she had received. In the midst of the conversation which followed, something was said about Graslin's health. The banker looked naïvely at himself in the beveled mirror framed in ebony.

"I am not handsome, mademoiselle," he said, and he explained that the redness of his face was due to his busy life, and told them how he had disobeyed his doctor's orders. He hoped that as soon as he had a woman to look after him and his household, a wife who would take more care of him than he took of himself, he should look quite a different man.

"As if anybody married a man for his looks, mate!" cried the dealer in old iron, slapping his fellow-countryman on the thigh.

Graslin's explanation appealed to instinctive feelings which more or less fill every woman's heart. Véronique bethought herself of her own face, marred by a hideous disease, and in her Christian humility she thought better of her first impression. Just then some one whistled in the street outside, Graslin went down, followed by Sauviat, who felt uneasy. Both men soon returned. The porter had brought the first bouquet of flowers, which had been in readiness for the occasion. At the reappearance of the banker with this stack of exotic blossoms, which he offered to his future bride, Véronique's feelings were very different from those with which she had first seen Graslin himself. The room was filled with the sweet scent, for Véronique it was a realization of her day-dreams of the tropics. She had never seen white camellias before, had never known the scent of the Alpine cytisus, the exquisite fragrance of the citronella, the jessamine of the Azores, the verbena and musk-rose, and their sweetness, like a melody in perfume, falling on her senses stirred a vague tenderness in her heart.

Graslin left Véronique under the spell of that emotion; but almost nightly after Sauviat returned home the banker waited

till all Limoges was asleep, and then slunk along under the walls to the house where the dealer in old iron lived. He used to tap softly on the shutters, the dog did not bark, the old man came down and opened the door to his fellow-countryman, and Graslin would spend a couple of hours in the brown room where Véronique sat, and Mother Sauviat would serve him up an Auvergnat supper. The uncouth lover never came without a bouquet for Véronique, rare flowers only to be procured in M. Grossetête's hothouse, M. Grossetête being the only person in Limoges in the secret of the marriage. The porter went after dark to bring the bouquet, which old Grossetête always gathered himself.

During those two months Graslin went about fifty times to the house, and never without some handsome present, rings, a gold watch, a chain, a dressing-case, or the like; amazing lavishness on his part, which, however, is easily explained.

Véronique would bring him almost the whole of her father's fortune—she would have seven hundred and fifty thousand francs. The old man kept for himself an income of eight thousand francs, an old investment in the Funds, made when he was in imminent danger of losing his head on the scaffold. In those days he had put sixty thousand francs in assignats (the half of his fortune) into government stock. It was Brézac who advised the investment, and dissuaded him afterwards when he thought of selling out; it was Brézac, too, who in the same emergency had been a faithful trustee for the rest of his fortune—the vast sum of seven hundred gold louis, with which Sauviat began to speculate as soon as he made good his escape from prison. In thirty years' time each of those gold louis had been transmuted into a bill for a thousand francs, thanks partly to the interest on the assignats, partly to the money which fell in at the time of Champagnac's death, partly to trading gains in the business, and the money standing at compound interest in Brézac's concern. Brézac had done honestly by Sauviat, as Auvergnat does by Auvergnat.

And so whenever Sauviat went to take a look at the front of Graslin's great house—

"Véronique shall live in that palace!" he said to himself.

He knew that there was not another girl in Limousin who would have seven hundred and fifty thousand francs paid down on her marriage-day, beside two hundred and fifty thousand of expectations. Graslin, the son-in-law of his choice, must therefore inevitably marry Véronique. So every evening Véronique received a bouquet, which daily made her little sitting-room bright with flowers, a bouquet carefully kept out of sight of the neighbors. She admired the beautiful jewels, the rubies, pearls and diamonds, the bracelets, dear to all daughters of Eve, and thought herself less ugly thus adorned. She saw her mother happy over this marriage, and she herself had no standard of comparison; she had no idea what marriage meant, no conception of its duties; and finally she heard the curate of Saint-Étienne praising Graslin to her, in his solemn voice, telling her that this was an honorable man with whom she would lead an honorable life. So Véronique consented to receive M. Graslin's attentions. In a lonely and monotonous life like hers, let a single person present himself day by day, and before long that person will not be indifferent; for either an aversion, confirmed by a deeper knowledge, will turn to hate, and the visitor's presence will be intolerable; or custom stales (so to speak) the sight of physical defects, and then the mind begins to look for compensations. Curiosity busies itself with the face; from some cause or other the features light up, there is some fleeting gleam of beauty there; and at last the nature, hidden beneath the outward form, is discovered. In short, first impressions once overcome, the force with which the one soul is attracted to the other is but so much the stronger, because the discovery of the true nature of the other is all its own. So love invariably begins. Herein lies the secret of the passionate love which beautiful persons entertain for others who are not beautiful in appearance; affection, looking

deeper than the outward form, sees the form no longer, but a soul, and thenceforward knows nothing else. Moreover, the beauty so necessary in a woman takes in a man such a strange character, that women's opinions differ as much on the subject of a man's good looks as men about the beauty of a woman.

After much meditation and many struggles with herself, Véronique allowed the banns to be published, and all Limoges rang with the incredible news. Nobody knew the secret—the bride's immense dowry. If that had been bruited abroad, Véronique might have chosen her husband, but perhaps even so would have been mistaken. It was a love-match on Graslin's side, people averred.

Upholsterers arrived from Paris to furnish the fine house. The banker was going to great expense over it, and nothing else was talked of in Limoges. People discussed the price of the chandeliers, the gilding of the drawing-room, the mythical subjects of the timepieces; and there were well-informed folk who could describe the flower-stands and the porcelain stoves, the luxurious novel contrivances. For instance, there was an aviary built above the ice-house in the garden of the Hôtel Graslin; all Limoges marveled at the rare birds in it—the paroquets, and Chinese pheasants, and strange waterfowl, there was no one who had not seen them.

M. and Mme. Grossetête, old people much looked up to in Limoges, called several times upon the Sauviats, Graslin accompanying them. Mme. Grossetête, worthy woman, congratulated Véronique on the fortunate marriage she was to make; so the Church, the family, and the world, together with every trifling circumstance, combined to bring this match about.

In the month of April formal invitations were sent to all Graslin's circle of acquaintance. At eleven o'clock one fine sunny morning a calèche and a brougham, drawn by Limousin horses in English harness (old Grossetête had superintended

his colleague's stable), arrived before the poor little shop where the dealer in old iron lived; and the excited quarter beheld the bridegroom's sometime partners and his two clerks. There was a prodigious sensation, the street was filled by the crowd eager to see the Sauviats' daughter. The most celebrated hairdresser in Limoges had set the bride's crown on her beautiful hair and arranged her veil of priceless Brussels lace; but Véronique's dress was of simple white muslin. A sufficiently imposing assembly of the most distinguished women of Limoges was present at the wedding in the cathedral; the bishop himself, knowing the piety of the Sauviats, condescended to perform the marriage ceremony. People thought the bride a plain-looking girl. For the first time she entered her hôtel, and went from surprise to surprise. A state dinner preceded the ball, to which Graslin had invited almost all Limoges. The dinner given to the bishop, the prefect, the president of the court of first instance, the public prosecutor, the mayor, the general, and to Graslin's sometime employers and their wives was a triumph for the bride, who, like all simple and unaffected people, proved unexpectedly charming. None of the married people would dance, so that Véronique continued to do the honors of her house, and won the esteem and good graces of most of her new acquaintances; asking old Grossetête, who had taken a great kindness for her, for information about her guests, and so avoiding blunders. During the evening the two retired bankers spread the news of the fortune, immense for Limousin, which the parents of the bride had given her. At nine o'clock the dealer in old iron went home to bed, leaving his wife to preside at the ceremony of undressing the bride. It was said in the town that Mme. Graslin was plain but well shaped.

Old Sauviat sold his business and his house in the town, and bought a cottage on the left bank of the Vienne, between Limoges and Le Cluzeau, and ten minutes' walk from the Faubourg Saint-Martial. Here he meant that he and his

wife should end their days in peace. The two old people had rooms in Graslin's hôtel, and dined there once or twice a week with their daughter, whose walks usually took the direction of their house.

The retired dealer in old iron had nothing to do, and nearly died of leisure. Luckily for him, his son-in-law found him some occupation. In 1823 the banker found himself with a porcelain factory on his hands. He had lent large sums to the manufacturers, which they were unable to repay, so he had taken over the business to recoup himself. In this concern he invested more capital, and by this means, and by his extensive business connections, made of it one of the largest factories in Limoges; so that when he sold it in three years after he took it over, he made a large profit on the transaction. He made his father-in-law the manager of this factory, situated in the very same quarter of Saint-Martial where his house stood; and in spite of Sauviat's seventy-two years, he had done not a little in bringing about the prosperity of a business in which he grew quite young again. The plan had its advantages likewise for Graslin; but for old Sauviat, who threw himself heart and soul into the porcelain factory, he would perhaps have been obliged to take a clerk into partnership and lose part of the profits, which he now received in full; but as it was, he could look after his own affairs in the town, and feel his mind at ease as to the capital invested in the porcelain works.

In 1827 Sauviat met with an accident, which ended in his death. He was busy with the stock-taking, when he stumbled over one of the crates in which the china was packed, grazing his leg slightly. He took no care of himself, and mortification set in; they talked of amputation, but he would not hear of losing his leg, and so he died. His widow made over about two hundred and fifty thousand francs, the amount of Sauviat's estate, to her daughter and son-in-law, Graslin undertaking to pay her two hundred francs a month, an amount amply

sufficient for her needs. She persisted in living on without a servant in the little cottage; keeping her point with the obstinacy of old age and in spite of her daughter's entreaties; but, on the other hand, she went almost every day to the Hôtel Graslin, and Véronique's walks, as heretofore, usually ended at her mother's house. There was a charming view from the windows of the river and the little island in the Vienne, which Véronique had loved in the old days, and called her Isle of France.

The story of the Sauviats has been anticipated partly to save interruption to the other story of the Graslins' household, partly because it serves to explain some of the reasons of the retired life which Véronique Graslin led. The old mother foresaw how much her child might one day be made to suffer through Graslin's avarice; for long she held out, and refused to give up the rest of her fortune, and only gave way when Véronique insisted upon it. Véronique was incapable of imagining circumstances in which a wife desires to have the control of her property, and acted upon a generous impulse; in this way she meant to thank Graslin for giving her back her liberty.

The unaccustomed splendors of Graslin's marriage had been totally at variance with his habits and nature. The great capitalist's ideas were very narrow. Véronique had had no opportunity of gauging the man with whom she must spend the rest of her life. During those fifty-five evening visits Graslin had shown but one side of his character—the man of business, the undaunted worker who planned and carried out large undertakings, the capitalist who looked at public affairs with a view to their probable effect on the bank-rate and opportunities of money-making. And, under the influence of his father-in-law's million, Graslin had behaved generously in those days, though even then his lavish expenditure was made to gain his own ends; he was drawn into expense in the springtide days of his marriage partly by the possession

of the great house, which he called his "Folly," the house still called the Hôtel Graslin in Limoges.

As he had the horses, the calèche, and brougham, it was natural to make use of them to pay a round of visits on his marriage, and to go to the dinner-parties and dances given in honor of the bride by official dignitaries and wealthy houses. Acting on the impulses which carried him out of his ordinary sphere, Graslin was "at home" to callers one day in the week, and sent to Paris for a cook. For about a year, indeed, he led the ordinary life of a man who has seventeen hundred thousand francs of his own, and can command a capital of three millions. He had come to be the most conspicuous personage in Limoges. During that year he generously allowed Mme. Graslin twenty-five twenty-franc pieces every month.

Véronique on her marriage had become a person of great interest to the rank and fashion of Limoges; she was a kind of godsend to the idle curiosity which finds such meagre sustenance in the provinces. Véronique who had so suddenly made her appearance was a phenomenon, the more closely scrutinized on that account; but she always maintained the simple and unaffected attitude of an onlooker who watches manners and usages unknown to her, and seeks to conform to them. From the first she had been pronounced to have a good figure and a plain face, and now it was decided that she was good-natured, but stupid. She was learning so many things at once, she had so much to see and to hear, that her manner and talk gave some color to this accusation. A sort of torpor, moreover, had stolen over her which might well be mistaken for stupidity. Marriage, that "difficult profession" of wifehood, as she called it, in which the Church, the Code, and her own mother bade her practice the most complete resignation and perfect obedience, under pain of breaking all laws human and divine, and bringing about irreparable evils; marriage had plunged her into a bewilderment which grew to the pitch of

vertigo and delirium. While she sat silent and reserved, she heard her own thoughts as plainly as the voices about her. For her "existence" had come to be extremely "difficult," to use the phrase of the dying Fontenelle, and ever more increasingly, till she grew frightened, she was afraid of herself. Nature recoiled from the orders of the soul; the body rebelled against the will. The poor snared creature wept on the bosom of the great Mother of the sorrowful and afflicted; she betook herself to the Church, she redoubled her fervor, she confided to her director the temptations which assailed her, she poured out her soul in prayer. Never at any time in her life did she fulfill her religious duties so zealously. The tempest of despair which filled her when she knew that she did not love her husband flung her at the foot of the altar, where divine comforting voices spoke to her of patience. And she was patient and sweet, living in hope of the joys of motherhood.

"Did you see Mme. Graslin this morning?" the women asked among themselves. "Marriage does not agree with her; she looked quite ghastly."

"Yes; but would you have given a daughter of yours to a man like M. Graslin? Of course, if you marry such a monster, you suffer for it."

As soon as Graslin was fairly married, all the mothers who had assiduously hunted him for the past ten years directed spiteful speeches at him. Véronique grew thin, and became plain in good earnest. Her eyes were heavy, her features coarsened, she looked shamefaced and embarrassed, and wore the dreary, chilling expression so repellent in bigoted devotees. A grayish tint overspread her complexion. She dragged herself languidly about during the first year of her marriage, usually the heyday of a woman's life. Before very long she sought for distraction in books, making use of her privilege as a married woman to read everything. She read Scott's novels, Byron's poems, the works of Schiller and Goethe, literature

ancient and modern. She learned to ride, to dance, and draw. She made sepia drawings and sketches in water-color, eager to learn every device which women use to while away the tedium of solitary hours; in short, that second education which a woman nearly always undertakes for a man's sake and with his guidance, she undertook alone and for herself.

In the loftiness of a nature frank and free, brought up, as it were, in the desert, but fortified by religion, there was a wild grandeur, cravings which found no satisfaction in the provincial society in which she moved. All the books described love; she looked up from her books on life, and found no traces of passion there. Love lay dormant in her heart like the germs which wait for the sun. Through a profound melancholy, caused by constant brooding over herself, she came by dim and winding ways back to the last bright dreams of her girlhood. She dwelt more than once on the old romantic imaginings, and became the heroine and the theatre of the drama. Once again she saw the island bathed in light, full of blossom and sweet scents, and all things grateful to her soul.

Not seldom her sad eyes wandered over her rooms with searching curiosity; the men she saw were all like Graslin; she watched them closely, and seemed to turn questioningly from them to their wives; but on the women's faces she saw no sign of her own secret trouble, and sadly and wearily she returned to her starting-point, uneasy about herself. Her highest thoughts met with a response in the books which she read of a morning, their wit pleased her; but in the evening she heard nothing but commonplace thoughts, which no one attempted to disguise by giving a witty turn to them; the talk around her was vapid and empty, or ran upon gossip and local news, which had no interest for her. She wondered sometimes at the warmth of discussions in which there was no question of sentiment, for her the very core of life. She was often seen gazing before her with fixed, wide eyes, thinking,

doubtless, of hours which she had spent, while still a girl ignorant of life, in the room where everything had been in keeping with her fancies, and now laid in ruins, like Véronique's own existence. She shrank in pain from the thought of being drawn into the eddy of petty cares and interests like the other women among whom she was forced to live; her ill-concealed disdain of the littleness of her lot, visible upon her lips and brow, was taken for upstart insolence.

Mme. Graslin saw the coolness upon all faces, and felt a certain bitter tone in the talk. She did not understand the reason, for as yet she had not made a friend sufficiently intimate to enlighten or counsel her. Injustice, under which small natures chafe, compels loftier souls to return within themselves, and induces in them a kind of humility. Véronique blamed herself, and tried to discover where the fault lay. She tried to be gracious, she was pronounced to be insincere; she redoubled her kindliness, and was said to be a hypocrite (her devotion giving color to the slander); she was lavish of hospitality, and gave dinners and dances, and was accused of pride. All Mme. Graslin's efforts were unsuccessful. She was misjudged and repulsed by the petty querulous pride of provincial coteries, where susceptibilities are always upon the watch for offenses; she went no more into society, and lived in the strictest retirement. The love in her heart turned to the Church. The great spirit in its feeble house of flesh saw in the manifold behests of Catholicism but so many stones set by the brink of the precipices of life, raised there by charitable hands to prop human weakness by the way. So every least religious observance was practiced with the most punctilious care.

Upon this, the Liberal party added Mme. Graslin's name to the list of bigots in the town. She was classed among the Ultras, and party spirit strengthened the various grudges which Véronique had innocently stored up against herself, with its periodical exacerbations. But as she had nothing to

lose by this ostracism, she went no more into society, and betook herself to her books, with the infinité resources which they opened to her. She thought over her reading, she compared methods, she increased the amount of her actual knowledge and her power of acquiring it, and by so doing opened the gateways of her mind to curiosity.

It was at this period of close and persistent study, while religion supported her, that she gained a friend in M. Grossetête, an old man whose real ability had not grown so rusty in the course of a life in a country town but that contact with a keen intelligence could still draw a few sparks from it. The kind soul was deeply interested in Véronique, who, in return for the mild warmth of the mellowed affection which age alone can give, put forth all the treasures of her soul; for him the splendid powers cultivated in secret first blossomed forth.

A fragment of a letter written at this time to M. Grossetête will describe the mental condition of a woman who one day should give proof of a firm temper and lofty nature:

"The flowers which you sent to me for the dance were very lovely, yet they suggested painful thoughts. The sight of that beauty, gathered by you to decorate a festival, and to fade on my breast and in my hair, made me think of other flowers born to die unseen in your woods, to shed sweet scent that no one breathes. Then I asked myself why I was dancing, why I had decked myself with flowers, just as I ask God why I am here in the world. You see, my friend, that in everything there lurks a snare for the unhappy, just as the drollest trifles bring the sick back to their own sufferings. That is the worst of some troubles: they press upon us so constantly that they shape themselves into an idea which is ever present in our minds. An ever-present trouble ought surely to be a hallowed thought. You love flowers for their own sake; I love them as I love beautiful music. As I once told you, the secret of a host of things is hidden from me—— You,

my old friend, for instance, have a passion for gardening. When you come back to town, teach me to share in this taste of yours; send me with a light footstep to my hothouse to feel the interest which you take in watching your plants grow. You seem to me to live and blossom with them, to take a delight in them, as in something of your own creation; to discover new colors, novel splendors, which come forth under your eyes, the result of your labors. I feel that the emptiness of my life is breaking my heart. For me, my hothouse is full of pining souls. The distress which I force myself to relieve saddens my very soul. I find some young mother without linen for her newborn babe, some old man starving, I make their troubles mine, and even when I have helped them, the feelings aroused in me by the sight of misery relieved are not enough to satisfy my soul. Oh! my friend, I feel that I have great powers asserting themselves in me, powers of doing evil, it may be, which nothing can crush—powers that the hardest commandments of religion cannot humble. When I go to see my mother, when I am quite alone among the fields, I feel that I must cry aloud, and I cry. My body is the prison in which one of the evil genii has pent up some moaning creature, until the mysterious word shall be uttered which shatters the cramping cell. But this comparison is not just. In my case it should be reversed. It is the body which is a prisoner, if I may make use of the expression. Does not religion occupy my soul? And the treasures gained by reading are constant food for the mind. Why do I long for any change, even if it comes as suffering—for any break in the enervating peace of my lot? Unless I find some sentiment to uphold me, some strong interest to cultivate, I feel that I shall drift towards the abyss where every idea grows hazy and meaningless, where character is enervated, where the springs of one's being grow slack and inert, where I shall be no longer the woman nature intended me to be. That is what my cries mean—— But you will not cease to send flowers to me

because of this outcry of mine? Your friendship has been so sweet and pleasant a thing, that it has reconciled me with myself for several months. Yes, I feel happy when I think that you sometimes throw a friendly glance over the blossoming desert-place, my inner self; that the wanderer, half-dead after her flight on the fiery steed of a dream, will meet with a kind word of greeting from you on her return."

Three years after Véronique's marriage, it occurred to Graslin that his wife never used the horses, and, a good opportunity offering itself, he sold them. The carriages were sold at the same time, the coachman was dismissed, and the cook from Paris transferred to the bishop's establishment. A woman-servant took his place. Graslin ceased to give his wife an allowance, saying that he would pay all the bills. He was the happiest man in the world when he met with no opposition from the wife who had brought him a million. There was not much merit, it is true, in Mme. Graslin's self-denial. She knew nothing of money, she had been brought up in ignorance of it as an indispensable element in life. Graslin found the sums which he had given to her lying in a corner of her desk; scarcely any of it had been spent. Véronique gave to the poor, her trousseau had been so large that as yet she had had scarcely any expenses for dress. Graslin praised Véronique to all Limoges as the pattern of wives.

The splendor of the furniture gave him pangs, so he had it all shrouded in covers. His wife's bedroom, boudoir, and dressing-room alone escaped this dispensation, an economical measure which economized nothing, for the wear and tear to the furniture is the same, covers or no covers.

He next took up his abode on the ground floor, where the counting-house and office had been established, so he began his old life again, and was as keen in pursuit of gain as before. The Auvergnat banker thought himself a model husband because he breakfasted and dined with his wife, who carefully

ordered the meals for him; but he was so extremely unpunctual, that he came in at the proper hour scarce ten times a month; and though, out of thoughtfulness, he asked her never to wait for him, Véronique always stayed to carve for him; she wanted to fulfill her wifely duties in some one visible manner. His marriage had not been a matter to which the banker gave much thought; his wife represented the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs; he had not discovered that that wife shrank from him. Gradually he had left Mme. Graslin to herself, and became absorbed in business; and when he took it into his head to have a bed put up for himself in a room next to his private office, Véronique saw that his wishes were carried out at once.

So after three years of marriage this ill-assorted couple went their separate ways as before, and felt glad to return to them. The capitalist, owner now of eighteen hundred thousand francs, returned to his occupation of money-making with all the more zest after the brief interval. His two clerks and the office-boy were somewhat better lodged and a little better fed —that was all the difference between the past and the present. His wife had a cook and a waiting-maid (the two servants could not well be dispensed with), and no calls were made on Graslin's purse except for strict necessaries.

And Véronique was happy in the turn things had taken; she saw in the banker's satisfaction a compensation for a separation for which she had never asked; it was impossible that Graslin should shrink from her as she shrank from him. She was half-glad, half-sorry of this secret divorce; she had looked forward to motherhood, which should bring a new interest into her life; but in spite of their mutual resignation, there was no child of the marriage as yet in 1828.

So Mme. Graslin, envied by all Limoges, led as lonely a life in her splendid home as formerly in her father's hovel; but the hopes and the childish joys of inexperience were gone. She lived in the ruins of her "castles in Spain,"

enlightened by sad experience, sustained by a devout faith, busying herself for the poor of the district, whom she loaded with kindnesses. She made baby linen for them; she gave sheets and bedding to those who lay on straw; she went everywhere with her maid—a good Auvergnate whom her mother found for her. This girl attached herself body and soul to her mistress, and became a charitable spy for her, whose mission it was to find out trouble to soothe and distress to relieve. This life of busy benevolence and of punctilious performance of the duties enjoined by the Church was a hidden life, only known by the curés of the town who directed it, for Véronique took their counsel in all that she did, so that the money intended for the deserving poor should not be squandered by vice.

During these years Véronique found another friendship quite as precious to her and as warm as her friendship with old Grossetête. She became one of the flock of the Abbé Dutheil, one of the vicars-general of the diocese. This priest belonged to the small minority among the French clergy who lean towards concession, who would fain associate the Church with the popular cause. By putting evangelical principles in practice, the Church should gain her old ascendency over the people, whom she could then bind to the Monarchy. But the Abbé Dutheil's merits were unrecognized, and he was persecuted. Perhaps he had seen that it was hopeless to attempt to enlighten the Court of Rome and the clerical party; perhaps he had sacrificed his convictions at the bidding of his superiors; at any rate, he dwelt within the limits of the strictest orthodoxy, knowing the while that the mere expression of his convictions would close his way to a bishopric. A great and Christian humility, blended with a lofty character, distinguished this eminent churchman. He had neither pride nor ambition, and stayed at his post, doing his duty in the midst of peril. The Liberal party in the town, who knew nothing of his motives, quoted his opinions in

support of their own, and reckoned him as a "patriot," a word which means "a revolutionaire" for good Catholics. He was beloved by those below him, who did not dare to praise his worth; dreaded by his equals, who watched him narrowly; and a thorn in the side of his bishop. He was not exactly persecuted, his learning and virtues were too well known; it was impossible to find fault with him freely, though he criticised the blunders in policy by which the Throne and the Church alternately compromised each other, and pointed out the inevitable results; like poor Cassandra, he was reviled by his own party before and after the fall which he predicted. Nothing short of a revolution was likely to shake the Abbé Dutheil from his place; he was a foundation-stone in the Church, an unseen block of granite on which everything else rests. His utility was recognized, and—he was left in his place, like most of the real power of which mediocrity is jealous and afraid. If, like the Abbé de Lamennais, he had taken up the pen, he would probably have shared his fate; at him, too, the thunderbolts of Rome would have been launched.

In person the Abbé Dutheil was commanding. Something in his appearance spoke of a soul so profound that the surface is always calm and smooth. His height and spare frame did not mar the general effect of the outlines of his figure, which vaguely recalled those forms which Spanish painters loved best to paint for great monastic thinkers and dreamers—forms which Thorvaldsen in our own time has selected for his apostles. His face, with the long, almost austere lines in it, which bore out the impression made by the straight folds of his garments, possessed the same charm which the sculptors of the middle ages discovered and recorded in the mystic figures about the doorways of their churches. His grave thoughts, grave words, and grave tones were all in keeping, and the expression of the Abbé's personality. At the first sight of the dark eyes, which austerity had surrounded with

hollow shadowy circles; the forehead, yellowed like old marble; the bony outlines of the head and hands, no one could have expected to hear any voice but his, or any teaching but that which fell from his lips. It was this purely physical grandeur, in keeping with the moral grandeur of his nature, that gave him a certain seeming haughtiness and aloofness, belied, it is true, by his humility and his talk, yet unprepossessing in the first instance. In a higher position these qualities would have been advantages which would have enabled him to gain a necessary ascendency over the crowd —an ascendency which it is quick to feel and to recognize; but he was a subordinate, and a man's superiors never pardon him for possessing the natural insignia of power, the majesty so highly valued in an older time, and often so signally lacking in modern upholders of authority.

His colleague, the Abbé de Grancour, the other vicar-general of the diocese, a blue-eyed, stout little man with a florid complexion, worked willingly enough with the Abbé Dutheil, albeit their opinions were diametrically opposed; a curious phenomenon, which only a wily courtier will regard as a natural thing; but, at the same time, the Abbé de Grancour was very careful not to commit himself in any way which might cost him the favor of his bishop; the little man would have sacrificed anything (even convictions) to stand well in that quarter. He had a sincere belief in his colleague, he recognized his ability; in private he admitted his doctrines, while he condemned them in public; for men of his kind are attracted to a powerful character, while they fear and hate the superiority whose society they cultivate. "He would put his arms round my neck while he condemned me," said the Abbé Dutheil. The Abbé de Grancour had neither friends nor enemies, and was likely to die a vicar-general. He gave out that he was drawn to Véronique's house by a wish to give a woman so benevolent and so devout the benefit of his counsels, and the bishop signified his approval; but, in

reality, he was only too delighted to spend an evening now and then in this way with the Abbé Dutheil.

From this time forward both priests became pretty constant visitors in Véronique's house; they used to bring her a sort of general report of any distress in the district, and talk over the best means of benefiting the poor morally and materially; but year by year M. Graslin drew the purse-strings closer and closer; for, in spite of ingenious excuses devised by his wife and Aline the maid, he suspected that all the money was not required for expenses of dress and housekeeping. He grew angry at last when he reckoned up the amount which his wife gave away. He himself would go through the bills with the cook, he went minutely into the details of their expenditure, and showed himself the great administrator that he was by demonstrating conclusively from his own experience that it was possible to live in luxury on three thousand francs per annum. Whereupon he compounded the matter with his wife by allowing her a hundred francs a month, to be duly accounted for, pluming himself on the royal bounty of the grant. The garden, now handed over to him, was "done up" of a Sunday by the porter, who had a liking for gardening. After the gardener was dismissed, the conservatory was turned to account as a warehouse, where Graslin deposited the goods left with him as security for small loans. The birds in the aviary above the ice-house were left to starve, to save the expense of feeding them; and when at length a winter passed without a single frost, he took that opportunity of declining to pay for ice any longer. By the year 1828 every article of luxury was curtailed, and parsimony reigned undisturbed in the Hôtel Graslin.

During the first three years after Graslin's marriage, with his wife at hand to make him follow out the doctor's instructions, his complexion had somewhat improved; now it inflamed again, and became redder and more florid than in the past. So largely, at the same time, did his business

increase, that the porter was promoted to be a clerk (as his master had been before him), and another Auvergnat had to be found to do the odd jobs of the Hôtel Graslin.

After four years of married life the woman who had so much wealth had not three francs to call her own. To the niggardliness of her parents succeeded the no less niggardly dispensation of her husband; and Mme. Graslin, whose benevolent impulses were checked, felt the need of money for the first time.

In the beginning of the year 1828 Véronique had recovered the bloom of health which had lent such beauty to the innocent girl who used to sit at the window in the old house in the Rue de la Cité. She had read widely since those days; she had learned to think and to express her thoughts; the habit of forming accurate judgments had lent profundity to her features. The little details of social life had become familiar to her, she wore a fashionable toilet with the most perfect ease and grace. If chance brought her into a drawing-room at this time, she found, not without surprise, that she was received with something like respectful esteem; this way of regarding her, like her reception, was due to the two vicars-general and old Grossetête. The bishop and one or two influential people, hearing of Véronique's unwearying benevolence, had talked about this fair life hidden from the world, this violet perfumed with virtues, this blossom of unfeigned piety. So, all unknown to Mme. Graslin, a revolution had been wrought in her favor; one of those reactions so much the more lasting and sure because they are slowly affected. With this right-about-face in opinion Véronique became a power in the land. Her drawing-room was the resort of the luminaries of Limoges; the practical change was brought about by this means:

The young Vicomte de Granville came to the town at the end of that year, preceded by the ready-made reputation which awaits a Parisian on his arrival in the provinces. He

had been appointed deputy public prosecutor to the Court of Limoges. A few days after his arrival he said, in answer to a sufficiently silly question, that Mme. Graslin was the cleverest, most amiable, and most distinguished woman in the city, and this at the prefect's "At Home," and before a whole room full of people.

"And the most beautiful as well, perhaps?" suggested the receiver-general's wife.

"There I do not venture to agree with you," he answered; "when you are present I am unable to decide. Mme. Graslin's beauty is not of a kind which should inspire jealousy in you, she never appears in broad daylight. Mme. Graslin is only beautiful for those whom she loves; you are beautiful for all eyes. If Mme. Graslin is deeply stirred, her face is transformed by its expression. It is like a landscape, dreary in winter, glorious in summer. Most people only see it in winter; but if you watch her while she talks with her friends on some literary or philosophical subject, or upon some religious question which interests her, her face lights up, and suddenly she becomes another woman, a woman of wonderful beauty."

This declaration, a recognition of the same beautiful transfiguration which Véronique's face underwent as she returned to her place from the communion table, made a sensation in Limoges, for the new substitute (destined, it was said, to be attorney-general one day) was the hero of the hour. In every country town a man a little above the ordinary level becomes for a shorter or longer time the subject of a craze, a sham enthusiasm to which the idol of the moment falls a victim. To these freaks of the provincial drawing-room we owe the local genius and the person who suffers from the chronic complaint of unappreciated superiority. Sometimes it is native talent which women discover and bring into fashion, but more frequently it is some outsider; and for once, in the case of the Vicomte de Granville, the homage was paid to genuine ability.

The Parisian found that Mme. Graslin was the only woman with whom he could exchange ideas or carry on a sustained and varied conversation ; and a few months after his arrival, as the charm of her talk and manner gained upon him, he suggested to some of the prominent men in the town, and to the Abbé Dutheil among them, that they might make their party at whist of an evening in Mme. Graslin's drawing-room. So Véronique was at home to her friends for five nights in the week (two days she wished to keep free, she said, for her own concerns) ; and when the cleverest men in the town gathered about Mme. Graslin, others were not sorry to take brevet rank as wits by spending their evenings in her society. Véronique received the two or three distinguished military men stationed in the town or on the garrison staff. The entire freedom of discussion enjoyed by her visitors, the absolute discretion required of them, tacitly and by the adoption of the manners of the best society, combined to make Véronique exclusive and very slow to admit those who courted the honor of her society to her circle. Other women saw not without jealousy that the cleverest and pleasantest men gathered round Mme. Graslin, and her power was the more widely felt in Limoges because she was exclusive. The four or five women whom she accepted were strangers to the district, who had accompanied their husbands from Paris, and looked on provincial tittle-tattle with disgust. If some one chanced to call who did not belong to the inner *cénacle*, the conversation underwent an immediate change, and with one accord all present spoke of indifferent things.

So the Hôtel Graslin became a sort of oasis in the desert where a chosen few sought relief in each other's society from the tedium of provincial life, a house where officials might discuss politics and speak their minds without fear of their opinions being reported, where all things worthy of mockery were fair game for wit and laughter, where every one laid aside his professional uniform to give his natural character free play.

In the beginning of that year 1828, Mme. Graslin, whose girlhood had been spent in the most complete obscurity, who had been pronounced to be plain and stupid and a complete nullity, was now looked upon as the most important person in the town, and the most conspicuous woman in society. No one called upon her in the morning, for her benevolence and her punctuality in the performance of her duties of religion were well known. She almost invariably went to the first mass, returning in time for her husband's early breakfast. He was the most unpunctual of men, but she always sat with him, for Graslin had learned to expect this little attention from his wife. As for Graslin, he never let slip an opportunity of praising her; he thought her perfection. She never asked him for money; he was free to pile up silver crown on silver crown, and to expand his field of operations. He had opened an account with the firm of Brézac; he had set sail upon a commercial sea, and the horizon was gradually widening out before him; his over-stimulated interest, intent upon the great events of the green table called very superficially Speculation, kept him perpetually in the cold, frenzied intoxication of the gambler.

During this happy year, and indeed until the beginning of the year 1829, Mme. Graslin's friends watched a strange change passing in her, under their eyes; her beauty became really extraordinary, but the reasons of the change were never discovered. Her eyes seemed to be bathed in a soft liquid light, full of tenderness, the blue iris widened like an expanding flower as the dark pupils contracted. Memories and happy thoughts seemed to light up her brow, which grew whiter, like some ridge of snow in the dawn, her features seemed to regain their purity of outline in some refining fire within. Her face lost the feverish brown color which threatens inflammation of the liver, the malady of vigorous temperaments of troubled minds and thwarted affections. Her temples grew adorably fresh and youthful. Frequently her friends saw

glimpses of the divinely fair face which a Raphael might have painted, the face which disease had covered with an ugly film, such as time spreads over the canvas of the great master. Her hands looked whiter, there was a delicate fulness in the rounded curves of her shoulders, and her quick dainty movements displayed to the very full the lissome grace of her form.

The women said that she was in love with M. de Granville, who, for that matter, paid assiduous court to her, though Véronique raised between them the barriers of a pious resistance. The deputy public prosecutor professed a respectful admiration for her which did not impose upon frequenters of her house. Clearer-sighted observers attributed to a different cause this change, which made Véronique still more charming to her friends. Any woman, however devout, could not but feel in her inmost soul that it was sweet to be so courted, to know the satisfaction of living in a congenial atmosphere, the delight of exchanging ideas (so great a relief in a tedious life), the pleasure of the society of well-read and agreeable men, and of sincere friendships, which grew day by day. It needed, perhaps, an observer still more profound, more acute, or more suspicious than any of those who came to the Hôtel Graslin to divine the untamed greatness, the strength of the woman of the people pent up in the depths of Véronique's nature. Now and again they might surprise her in a torpid mood, overcast by gloomy or merely pensive musings, but all her friends knew that she carried many troubles in her heart; that, doubtless, in the morning she had been initiated into many sorrows, that she penetrated into dark places where vice is appalling by reason of its unblushing front. Not seldom, indeed, the Vicomte, soon promoted to be advocate-general, scolded her for some piece of blind benevolence discovered by him in the course of his investigations. Justice complained that Charity had paved the way to the police court.

"Do you want money for some of your poor people?" old

"DO YOU WANT MONEY FOR SOME OF YOUR POOR PEOPLE?"



Grossetête had asked on this, as he took her hand in his. "I will share the guilt of your benefactions."

"It is impossible to make everybody rich," she answered, heaving a sigh.

An event occurred at the beginning of this year which was to change the whole current of Véronique's inner life, as well as the wonderful expression of her face, which henceforward became a portrait infinitely more interesting to a painter's eyes.

Graslin grew rather fidgety about his health, and to his wife's great despair left his ground-floor quarters and returned to her apartment to be tended. Soon afterwards Mme. Graslin's condition became a matter of town gossip; she was about to become a mother. Her evident sadness, mingled with joy, filled her friends' thoughts; they then divined that, in spite of her virtues, she was happiest when she lived apart from her husband. Perhaps she had had hopes for better things since the day when the Vicomte de Granville had declined to marry the richest heiress in Limousin, and still continued to pay court to her. Ever since that event the profound politicians who exercise the censorship of sentiments, and settle other people's business in the intervals of whist, had suspected the lawyer and young Mme. Graslin of basing hopes of their own on the banker's failing health—hopes which were brought to nothing by this unexpected development. It was a time in Véronique's life when deep distress of mind was added to the apprehensions of a first confinement, always more perilous, it is said, when a woman is past her first youth, but all through those days her friends showed themselves more thoughtful for her; there was not one of them but made her feel in innumerable small ways what warmth there was in these friendships of hers, and how solid they had become.

II.

TASCHERON.

It was in the same year that Limoges witnessed the terrible spectacle and strange tragedy of the Tascheron case, in which the young Vicomte de Granville displayed the talents which procured him the appointment of public prosecutor at a later day.

An old man living in a lonely house on the outskirts of the Faubourg Saint-Étienne was murdered. A large orchard isolates the dwelling on the side of the town, on the other there is a pleasure garden, with a row of unused hothouses at the bottom of it; then follow the open fields. The bank of the Vienne in this place rises up very steeply from the river, the little front garden slopes down to this embankment, and is bounded by a low wall surmounted by an open fence. Square stone posts are set along it at even distances, but the painted wooden railings are there more by way of ornament than as a protection to the property.

The old man, Pingret by name, a notorious miser, lived quite alone save for a servant, a countrywoman whom he employed in the garden. He trained his espaliers and pruned his fruit trees himself, gathering his crops and selling them in the town, and excelled in growing early vegetables for the market. The old man's niece and sole heiress, who had married a M. des Vanneaulx, a man of small independent means, and lived in Limoges, had many a time implored her uncle to keep a man as protection to the place, pointing out to him that he would be able to grow more garden produce in several borders planted with standard fruit trees beneath which he now sowed millet and the like; but it was of no use, the old man would not hear of it. This contradiction in a miser gave rise to all sorts of conjectures in the houses where the Vanneaulx spent their evenings. The

most divergent opinions had more than once divided parties at boston. Some knowing folk came to the conclusion that there was a treasure hidden under the growing luzern.

"If I were in Mme. des Vanneaulx's place," remarked one pleasant gentleman, "I would not worry my uncle, I know. If somebody murders him, well and good; somebody will murder him. I should come in for the property."

Mme. des Vanneaulx, however, thought differently. As a manager at the Théâtre-Italien implores the tenor who "draws" a full house to be very careful to wrap up his throat, and gives him his cloak when the singer has forgotten his overcoat, so did Mme. des Vanneaulx try to watch over her relative. She had offered little Pingret a magnificent yard dog, but the old man sent the animal back again by Jeanne Malassis his servant.

"Your uncle has no mind to have one more mouth to feed up at our place," said the handmaid to Mme. des Vanneaulx.

The event proved that his niece's fears had been but too well founded. Pingret was murdered one dark night in the patch of luzern, whither he had gone, no doubt, to add a few louis to a pot full of gold. The servant, awakened by the sounds of the struggle, had the courage to go to the old man's assistance, and the murderer found himself compelled to kill her also, lest she should bear witness against him. This calculation of probable risks, which nearly always prompts a man guilty of one murder to add another to his account, is one unfortunate result of the capital sentence which he beholds looming in the distance.

The double crime was accompanied by strange circumstances, which told as strongly for the defense as for the prosecution. When the neighbors had seen nothing of Pingret nor of the servant for the whole morning; when, as they came and went, they looked through the wooden railings and saw that the doors and windows (contrary to wont) were still barred and fastened, the thing began to be bruited abroad

through the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, till it reached Mme. des Vanneaulx in the Rue des Cloches. Mme. des Vanneaulx, whose mind always ran on horrors, sent for the police, and the doors were broken open. In the four patches of luzern there were four gaping holes in the earth, surrounded by rubbish, and strewn with broken shards of the pots which had been full of gold the night before. In two of the holes, which had been partly filled up, they found the bodies of old Pingret and Jeanne Malassis, buried in their clothes; she, poor thing, had run out barefooted in her night-dress.

While the public prosecutor, the commissary, and the examining magistrate took down all these particulars, the unlucky des Vanneaulx collected the scraps of broken pottery, put them together, and calculated the amount the jars should have held. The authorities, perceiving the common-sense of this proceeding, estimated the stolen treasure at a thousand pieces per pot; but what was the value of those coins? Had they been forty or forty-eight franc-pieces, twenty-four or twenty francs? Every creature in Limoges who had expectations felt for the des Vanneaulx in this trying situation. The sight of those fragments of crockery-ware which once held gold gave a lively stimulus to Limousin imaginations. As for little Pingret, who often came to sell his vegetables in the market himself, who lived on bread and onions, and did not spend three hundred francs in a year, who never did anybody a good turn, nor any harm either, no one regretted him in the least—he had never done a pennyworth of good to the Faubourg Saint-Étienne. As for Jeanne Malassis, her heroism was considered to be ill-timed; the old man, if he had lived, would have grudged her reward; altogether, her admirers were few compared with the number of those who remarked, "I should have slept soundly in her place, I know!"

Then the curious and the next-of-kin were made aware of the inconsistencies of certain misers. The police, when they

came to draw up the report, could find neither pen nor ink in the bare, cold, dismal, tumble-down house. The little old man's horror of expense was glaringly evident: in the great holes in the roof, which let in rain and snow as well as light; in the moss-covered cracks which rent the walls; in the rotting doors ready to drop from their hinges at the least shock; in the unoiled paper which did duty as glass in the windows. There was not a window curtain in the house, not a looking-glass over the mantel-shelves; the grates were chiefly remarkable for the absence of fire-irons and the accumulation of damp soot, a sort of varnish over the handful of sticks or the log of wood which lay on the hearth. And as to the furniture—a few crippled chairs and maimed armchairs, two beds, hard and attenuated (Time had adorned old Pingret's bed-curtains with open-work embroidery of a bold design), one or two cracked pots and riveted plates, a worm-eaten bureau, where the old man used to keep his garden seeds, household linen thick with darns and patches—the furniture, in short, consisted of a mass of rags, which had only a sort of life kept in them by the spirit of their owner, and now that he was gone, they dropped to pieces and crumbled to powder. At the first touch of the brutal hands of the police officers and infuriated next-of-kin they evaporated, heaven knows how, and came to nameless ruin and an indefinable end. They were not. Before the terrors of a public auction they vanished away.

For a long time the greater part of the inhabitants of the capital of Limousin continued to take an interest in the hard case of the worthy des Vanneaulx, who had two children; but as soon as justice appeared to have discovered the perpetrator of the crime, this person absorbed all their attention, he became the hero of the day, and the des Vanneaulx were relegated to the obscurity of the background.

Towards the end of the month of March, Mme. Graslin had already felt the discomforts incidental to her condition,

which could no longer be concealed. By that time inquiries were being made into the crime committed in the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, but the murderer was still at large. Véronique received visitors in her bedroom, whither her friends came for their game of whist. A few days later Mme. Graslin kept her room altogether. More than once already she had been seized with the unaccountable fancies commonly attributed to women with child. Her mother came almost every day to see her; the two spent whole hours in each other's society.

It was nine o'clock. The card-tables were neglected, every one was talking about the murder and the des Vanneaulx, when the Vicomte de Granville came in.

"We have caught the man who murdered old Pingret!" he cried in high glee.

"And who is it?" The question came from all sides.

"One of the workmen in a porcelain factory, a man of exemplary conduct, and in a fair way to make his fortune. He is one of your husband's old workmen," he added, turning to Mme. Graslin.

"Who is it?" Véronique asked faintly.

"Jean-François Tascheron."

"The unfortunate man!" she exclaimed. "Yes. I remember seeing him several times. My poor father recommended him to me as a valuable hand——"

"He left the place before Sauviat died," remarked old Mme. Sauviat; "he went over to the MM. Philippart to better himself. But is my daughter well enough to hear about this?" she added, looking at Mme. Graslin, who was as white as the sheets.

After that evening old Mother Sauviat left her house, and in spite of her seventy years, installed herself as her daughter's nurse. She did not leave Véronique's room. No matter at what hour Mme. Graslin's friends called to see her, they found the old mother sitting heroically at her post by the bed-

side, busied with her eternal knitting, brooding over her Véronique as in the days of the smallpox, answering for her child, and sometimes denying her to visitors. The love between the mother and daughter was so well known in Limoges that people took the old woman's ways as a matter of course.

A few days later, when the Vicomte de Granville began to give some of the details of the Tascheron case, in which the whole town took an eager interest, thinking to interest the invalid, La Sauviat cut him short by asking if he meant to give Mme. Graslin bad dreams again, but Véronique begged M. de Granville to go on, fixing her eyes on his face. So it fell out that Mme. Graslin's friends heard in her house the result of the preliminary examination, soon afterwards made public, at first-hand from the *avocat général.* Here, in a condensed form, is the substance of the indictment which was being drawn up by the prosecution :

Jean-François Tascheron was the son of a small farmer burdened with a large family, who lived in the township of Montégnac. Twenty years before the perpetration of this crime, whose memory still lingers in Limousin, Canton Montégnac bore a notoriously bad character. It was alleged in the criminal court of Limoges that fifty out of every hundred convictions came from the Montégnac district. Since 1816, two years after the arrival of the new curé, M. Bonnet, Montégnac lost its old reputation, and no longer sent up its contingent to the assizes. The change was generally set down to M. Bonnet's influence in the commune, which had once been a perfect hotbed of bad characters who gave trouble in all the country round about. Jean-François Tascheron's crime suddenly restored Montégnac to its former unenviable pre-eminence. It happened, singularly enough, that the Taschérons had been almost the only family in the countryside which had not departed from the old exemplary

traditions and religious habits now fast dying out in country places. In them the curé had found a moral support and basis of operations, and naturally he thought a great deal of them. The whole family were hard workers, remarkable for their honesty and the strong affection that bound them to each other; Jean-François Tascheron had had none but good examples set before him at home. A praiseworthy ambition had brought him to Limoges. He meant to make a little fortune honestly by a handicraft, and left the township, to the regret of his relations and friends, who were very much attached to him.

His conduct during his two years of apprenticeship was admirable; apparently no irregularity in his life had foreshadowed the hideous crime for which he forfeited his life. The leisure which other workmen wasted in the wineshop and debauches, Tascheron spent in study.

Justice in the provinces has plenty of time on her hands, but the most minute investigation threw no light whatever on the secrets of his existence. The landlady of Jean François' humble lodging, skillfully questioned, said that she had never had such a steady young man as a lodger. He was pleasant-spoken and good-tempered, almost gay, as you might say. About a year ago a change seemed to come over him. He would stop out all night several times a month, and often for several nights at a time. She did not know whereabouts in the town he spent those nights. Still, she had sometimes thought, judging by the mud on his boots, that her lodger had been somewhere out in the country. He used to wear pumps, too, instead of hobnailed boots, although he was going out of the town, and before he went he used to shave and scent himself, and put on clean clothes.

The examining magistrate carried his investigation to such a length that inquiries were made in houses of ill-fame and among licensed prostitutes, but no one knew anything of Jean-François Tascheron; other inquiries made among the

class of factory operatives and shop-girls met with no better success; none of those whose conduct was light had any relations with the accused.

A crime without any motive whatever is inconceivable, especially when the criminal's bent was apparently towards self-improvement, while his ambitions argued higher ideals and sense superior to that of other workmen. The whole criminal department, like the examining magistrate, were fain to find a motive for the murder in a passion for play on Tascheron's part; but after minute investigation, it was proved that the accused had never gambled in his life.

From the very first Jean-François took refuge in a system of denial which could not but break down in the face of circumstantial evidence when his case should come before a jury; but his manner of defending himself suggested the intervention of some person well acquainted with the law, or gifted with no ordinary intelligence. The evidence of his guilt, as in most similar cases, was at once unconvincing and yet too strong to be set aside. The principal points which told against Tascheron were four—his absence from home on the night of the murder (he would not say where he spent that night, and scorned to invent an *alibi*); a shred of his blouse, torn without his knowledge during the struggle with the poor servant-girl, and blown by the wind into the tree where it was found; the fact that he had been seen hanging about the house that evening by people in the suburb, who would not have remembered this but for the crime which followed; and, lastly, a false key which he had made to fit the lock of the garden-gate, which was entered from the fields. It had been hidden rather ingeniously in one of the holes, some two feet below the surface. M. des Vanneaulx had come upon it while digging to see whether by chance there might be a second hoard beneath the first. The police succeeded in finding out the man who supplied the steel, the vise, and the key-file. This had been their first clue, it put

them on Tascheron's track, and finally they arrested him on the limits of the department in a woods where he was waiting for the diligence. An hour later, and he would have been on his way to America. Moreover, in spite of the care with which the footprints had been erased in the trampled earth and on the muddy road, the rural policeman had found the marks of thin shoes, clear and unmistakable, in the soil. Tascheron's lodgings were searched, and a pair of pumps were found which exactly corresponded with the impress, a fatal coincidence which confirmed the curious observations of his landlady.

Then the criminal investigation department saw another influence at work in the crime, and a second and perhaps a prime mover in the case. Tascheron must have had an accomplice, if only for the reason that it was impossible for one man to take away such a weight of coin. No man, however strong, could carry twenty-five thousand francs in gold very far. If each of the pots had held so much, he must have made four journeys. Now, a singular accident determined the very hour when the deed was done. Jeanne Malassis, springing out of bed in terror at her master's shrieks, had overturned the table on which her watch lay (the one present which the miser had made her in five years). The fall had broken the mainspring, and stopped the hands at two o'clock.

In mid-March, the time of the murder, the sun rises between five and six in the morning. So on the hypothesis traced out by the police and the department, it was clearly impossible that Tascheron should have carried off the money unaided and alone, even for a short distance, in the time. The evident pains which the man had taken to erase other footprints to the neglect of his own, also indicated an unknown assistant.

Justice, driven to invent some reason for the crime, decided on a frantic passion for some woman, and, as she was not to

be found among the lower classes, forensic sagacity looked higher.

Could it be some woman of the bourgeoisie who, feeling sure of the discretion of a lover of so puritanical a cut, had read with him the opening chapters of a romance which had ended in this ugly tragedy? There were circumstances in the case which almost bore out this theory. The old man had been killed by blows from a spade. The murder, it seemed, was the result of chance, a sudden fortuitous development, and not a part of a deliberate plan. The two lovers might, perhaps, have concerted the theft, but not the second crime. Then Tascheron the lover and Pingret the miser had crossed each other's paths, and in the thick darkness of night two inexorable passions met on the same spot, both attracted thither by gold.

Justice devised a new plan for obtaining light on these dark facts. Jean-François had a favorite sister; her they arrested and examined privately, hoping in this way to come by a knowledge of the mysteries of her brother's private life. Denise Tascheron denied all knowledge of his affairs; prudence dictating a system of negative answers which led her questioners to suspect that she really knew the reasons of the crime. Denise Tascheron, as a matter of fact, knew nothing whatever about it, but for the rest of her days she was to be under a cloud in consequence of her detention.

The accused showed a spirit very unusual in a workingman. He was too clever for the cleverest "sheep of the prisons" with whom he came in contact—though he did not discover that he had to do with a spy. The keener intelligences among the magistracy saw in him a murderer through passion, not through necessity, like the common herd of criminals who pass by way of the petty sessions and the hulks to a capital charge. He was shrewdly plied with questions put with this idea; but the man's wonderful discretion left the magistrates much where they were before. The romantic but

plausible theory of a passion for a woman of higher rank, once admitted, insidious questions were suddenly asked more than once; but Jean-François discretion issued victorious from all the mental tortures which the ingenuity of an examining magistrate could inflict.

As a final expedient, Tascheron was told that the person for whom he had committed the crime had been discovered and arrested; but his face underwent no change, he contented himself with the ironical retort, "I should be very glad to see that person."

When these details became known, there were plenty of people who shared the magistrate's suspicions, confirmed to all appearance by the behavior of the accused, who maintained the silence of a savage. An all-absorbing interest attached to a young man who had come to be a problem. Every one will understand how the public curiosity was stimulated by the facts of the case, and how eagerly reports of the examination were followed; for, in spite of all the probings of the police, the case for the prosecution remained on the brink of a mystery, which the authorities did not dare to penetrate, beset with dangers as it was. In some cases a half-certainty is not enough for the magistracy. So it was hoped that the buried truth would arise and come to light at the great day of the assizes, an occasion when criminals frequently lose their heads.

It happened that M. Graslin was on the jury empaneled for the occasion, and Véronique could not but hear through him or through M. de Granville the whole story of a trial which kept Limousin, and indeed all France, in excitement for a fortnight. The behavior of the prisoner at the bar justified the romances founded on the conjectures of justice which were current in the town; more than once his eyes were turned searchingly on the bevy of women privileged to enjoy the spectacle of a sensational drama in real life. Every time that the clear impenetrable gaze was turned on the fashionable

audience, it produced a flutter of consternation, so greatly did every woman fear lest she might seem to inquisitive eyes in the court to be the prisoner's partner in guilt.

The useless efforts of the criminal investigation department were then made public, and Limoges was informed of the precautions taken by the accused to ensure the complete success of his crime.

Some months before that fatal night, Jean-François had procured a passport for North America. Clearly he had meant to leave France. Clearly, therefore, the woman in the case must be married; for there was, of course, no object to be gained by eloping with a young girl. Perhaps it was a desire to maintain the fair unknown in luxury which had prompted the crime; but, on the other hand, a search through the registers of the administration had discovered that no passport for that country had been made out in a woman's name. The police had even investigated the registers in Paris as well as those of the neighboring perfectures, but fruitlessly.

As the case proceeded, every least detail brought to light revealed profound forethought on the part of a man of no ordinary intelligence. While the most virtuous ladies of Limousin explained the sufficiently inexplicable use of evening shoes for a country excursion on muddy roads and heavy soil, by the plea that it was necessary to spy upon old Pingret; the least coxcombically given of men were delighted to point out how eminently a pair of thin pumps favored noiseless movements about a house, scaling windows, and stealing along corridors.

Evidently Jean-François Tascheron and his mistress, a young, romantic, and beautiful woman (for every one drew a superb portrait of the lady), had contemplated forgery, and the words "and wife" were to be filled in after his name on the passport.

Card-parties were broken up during these evenings by malicious conjectures and comments. People began to cast about

for the names of women who went to Paris during March, 1829; or of others who might be supposed to have made preparations openly or secretly for flight. The trial supplied Limoges with a second Fualdès case, with an unknown Mme. Manson by way of improvement on the first. Never, indeed, was any country town so puzzled as Limoges after the court rose each day. People's very dreams turned on the trial. Everything that transpired raised the accused in their eyes; his answers, skillfully turned over and over, expanded and edited, supplied a theme for endless argument. One of the jury asked, for instance, why Tascheron had taken a passport for America, to which the prisoner replied that he meant to open a porcelain factory there. In this way he screened his accomplice without quitting his line of defense, and supplied conjecture with a plausible and sufficient motive for the crime in this ambition of his.

In the thick of these disputes, it was impossible that Véronique's friends should not also try to account for Tascheron's close reserve. One evening she seemed better than usual. The doctor had prescribed exercise; and that very morning Véronique, leaning on her mother's arm, had walked out as far as Mme. Sauviat's cottage, and rested there a while. When she came home again, she tried to sit up until her husband returned, but Graslin was late, and did not come back from the court till eight o'clock; his wife waited on him at dinner after her usual custom, and in this way she could not help but hear the discussion between her husband and his friends.

"We should have known more about this if my poor father were still alive," said Véronique, "or perhaps the man would not have committed the crime—— But I notice that you have all of you taken one strange notion into your heads! You will have it that there is a woman at the bottom of this business (as far as that goes I myself am of your opinion), but why do you think that she is a married woman? Why cannot

he have loved some girl whose father and mother refused to listen to him?"

"Sooner or later a young girl might have been legitimately his," returned M. de Granville. "Tascheron is not wanting in patience; he would have had time to make an independence honestly; he could have waited until the girl was old enough to marry without her parents' consent."

"I did not know that such a marriage was possible," said Mme. Graslin. "Then how is it that no one had the least suspicion of it, here in a place where everybody knows the affairs of everybody else, and sees all that goes on in his neighbor's house? Two people cannot fall in love without at any rate seeing each other or being seen of each other! What do you lawyers think?" she continued, looking the *avocat général* full in the eyes.

"We all think that the woman must be the wife of some tradesman, a man in business."

"I am of a totally opposite opinion," said Mme. Graslin. "That kind of woman has not sentiments sufficiently lofty," a retort which drew all eyes upon her. Every one waited for the explanation of the paradox.

"At night," she said, "when I do not sleep, or when I lie in bed in the daytime, I cannot help thinking over this mysterious business, and I believe I can guess Tascheron's motives. These are my reasons for thinking that it is a girl, and not a woman in the case. A married woman has other interests, if not other feelings; she has a divided heart in her, she cannot rise to the full height of the exaltation inspired by a love so passionate as this. She must never have borne a child if she is to conceive a love in which maternal instincts are blended with those which spring from desire. It is quite clear that some woman who wished to be a sustaining power to him has loved this man. That unknown woman must have brought to her love the genius which inspires artists and poets, aye, and women also, but in another form, for it

is a woman's destiny to create, not things, but men. Our creations are our children, our children are our pictures, our books and statues. Are we not artists when we shape their lives from the first? So I am sure that if she is not a girl, she is not a mother; I would stake my head upon it. Lawyers should have a woman's instinct to apprehend the infinite subtle touches which continually escape them in so many cases.

"If I had been your substitute," she continued, turning to M. de Granville, "we should have discovered the guilty woman, always supposing that she is guilty. I think, with M. l'Abbé Dutheil, that the two lovers had planned to go to America, and to live there on poor Pingret's money, as they had none of their own. The theft, of course, led to the murder, the usual fatal consequence of the fear of detection and death. And it would be worthy of you," she added, with a suppliant glance at the young lawyer, "to withdraw the charge of malice aforethought; you would save the miserable man's life. He is so great in spite of his crime, that he would perhaps expiate his sins by some magnificent repentance. The works of repentance should be taken into account in the deliberations of justice. In these days there are no better ways of atoning an offense than by the loss of a head, or by founding, as in olden times, a Milan cathedral?"

"Madame, your ideas are sublime," returned the lawyer; "but if the averment of malice aforethought were withdrawn, Tascheron would still be tried for his life; and it is a case of aggravated theft, it was committed at night, the walls were scaled, the premises broken into——"

"Then, do you think he will be condemned?" she asked, lowering her eyelids.

"I do not doubt it. The prosecution has the best of it."

A light shudder ran through Mme. Graslin. Her dress rustled.

"I feel cold," she said.

She took her mother's arm and went to bed.

"She is much better to-day," said her friends.

The next morning Véronique was at death's door. She smiled at her doctor's surprise at finding her in an almost dying state.

"Did I not tell you that the walk would do me no good?" she said.

Ever since the opening of the trial there had been no trace of either swagger or hypocrisy in Tascheron's attitude. The doctor, always with a view to diverting his patient's mind, tried to explain this attitude out of which the counsel for the defense made capital for his client. The counsel's cleverness, the doctor opined, had dazzled the accused, who imagined that he should escape the capital sentence. Now and then an expression crossed his face which spoke plainly of hopes of some coming happiness greater than mere acquittal or reprieve. The whole previous life of this man of twenty-three was such a flat contradiction to the deeds which brought it to a close that his champions put forward his behavior as a conclusive argument. In fact, the clues spun by the police into a stout hypothesis fit to hang a man dwindled so pitiably when woven into the romance of the defense, that the prisoner's counsel fought for his client's life with some prospect of success. To save him he shifted the ground of the combat, and fought the battle out on the question of malice aforethought. It was admitted, without prejudice, that the robbery had been planned beforehand, but contended that the double murder had been the result of an unexpected resistance in both cases. The issue looked doubtful; neither side had made good their case.

When the doctor went, the *avocat général* came in as usual to see Véronique before he went to the court.

"I have read the counsel's speeches yesterday," she told

him. "To-day the other side will reply. I am so very much interested in the prisoner that I should like him to be saved. Could you not forego a triumph for once in your life? Let the counsel for the defense gain the day. Come, make me a present of this life, and—perhaps—some day mine shall be yours—— There is a doubt after that fine speech of Tascheron's counsel; well, then, why not——"

"Your voice is quivering——" said the Vicomte, almost taken by surprise.

"Do you know why?" she asked. "My husband has just pointed out a coincidence—hideous for a sensitive nature like mine—a thing that is likely to cause me my death. You will give the order for his head to fall just about the time when my child will be born."

"Can I reform the Code?" asked the public prosecutor.

"There, go! You do not know how to love!" she answered, and closed her eyes.

She lay back on her pillow, and dismissed the lawyer with an imperative gesture.

M. Graslin pleaded hard, but in vain, for an acquittal, advancing an argument, first suggested to him by his wife, and taken up by two of his friends on the jury: "If we spare the man's life, the des Vanneaulx will recover Pingret's money." This irresistible argument told upon the jury, and divided them—seven for acquittal as against five. As they failed to agree, the president and assessors were obliged to add their suffrages, and they were on the side of the minority. Jean-François Tascheron was found guilty of murder.

When sentence was passed, Tascheron burst into a blind fury, natural enough in a man full of strength and life, but seldom seen in court when it is an innocent man who is condemned. It seemed to every one who saw it that the drama was not brought to an end by the sentence. So obstinate a struggle (as often happens in such cases) gave rise to two diametrically opposite opinions as to the guilt of the central

figure in it. Some saw oppressed innocence in him, others a criminal justly punished. The Liberal party felt it incumbent upon them to believe in Tascheron's innocence; it was not so much conviction on their part as a desire to annoy those in office.

"What?" cried they. "Is a man to be condemned because his foot happens to suit the size of a footmark? Because, forsooth, he was not at his lodgings at the time? (As if any young fellow would not die sooner than compromise a woman!) Because he borrowed tools and bought steel?—(for it has not been proved that he made the key). Because some one finds a blue rag in a tree, where old Pingret very likely put it himself to scare the sparrows, and it happens to match a slit made in the blouse? Take a man's life on such grounds as these! And, after all, Jean-François has denied every charge, and the prosecution did not produce any witness who had seen him commit the crime."

Then they fell to corroborating, amplifying, and paraphrasing the speeches made by the prisoner's counsel and his line of defense. As for Pingret; what was Pingret? A money-box which had been broken open; so said the freethinkers.

A few so-called Progressives, who did not recognize the sacred laws of property (which the Saint-Simonians had already attacked in the abstract region of economical theory), went further still.

"Old Pingret," said these, "was the prime author of the crime. The man was robbing his country by hoarding the gold. What a lot of businesses that idle capital might have fertilized! He had thwarted industry; he was properly punished."

As for the servant-girl, they were sorry for her; and Denise, who had baffled the ingenuity of the lawyers, the girl who never opened her mouth at the trial without long pondering over what she meant to say, excited the keenest interest. She became a figure comparable, in another sense, with Jeanie

Deans, whom she resembled in charm of character, modesty, in her religious nature and personal comeliness. So François Tascheron still continued to excite the curiosity not merely of Limoges, but of the whole department. Some romantic women openly expressed their admiration of him.

"If there is a love for some woman about him at the bottom of all this," said these ladies, "the man is certainly no ordinary man. You will see that he will die bravely!"

Would he confess? Would he keep silence? Bets were taken on the question. Since that outburst of rage with which he received his doom (an outburst which might have had a fatal ending for several persons in court but for the intervention of the police), the criminal threatened violence indiscriminately to all and sundry who came near him, and with the ferocity of a wild beast. The gaoler was obliged to put him in a strait waistcoat; for if he was dangerous to others, he seemed quite as likely to attempt his own life. Tascheron's despair, thus restrained from all overt acts of violence, found a vent in convulsive struggles which frightened the warders, and in language which, in the middle ages, would have been set down to demoniacal possession.

He was so young that women were moved to pity that a life so filled with an all-engrossing love should be cut off. Quite recently, and as if written for the occasion, Victor Hugo's sombre elegy and vain plea for the abolition of the death-penalty (that support of the fabric of society) had appeared, and "The Condemned's Last Day" was the order of the day in all conversations. Then finally, above the boards of the assizes, set, as it were, upon a pedestal, rose the invisible mysterious figure of a woman, standing there with her feet dipped in blood; condemned to suffer heart-rending anguish, yet outwardly to live in unbroken household peace. At her every one pointed the finger—and yet, they almost admired that Limousin Medea with the inscrutable brow and the heart of steel in her white breast. Perhaps she dwelt in

the home of this one or that, and was the sister, cousin, wife, or daughter of such an one. What a horror in their midst! It is in the domain of the imagination, according to Napoleon, that the power of the unknown is incalculably great.

As for the des Vanneaulx's hundred thousand francs, all the efforts of the police had not succeeded in recovering the money; and the criminal's continued silence was a strange defeat for the prosecution. M. de Granville (in the place of the public prosecutor then absent at the Chamber of Deputies) tried the commonplace stratagem of inducing the condemned man to believe that the penalty might be commuted if a full confession were made. But the lawyer had scarcely showed himself before the prisoner greeted him with furious yells, and epileptic contortions, and eyes ablaze with anger and regret that he could not kill his enemy. Justice could only hope that the Church might effect something at the last moment. Again and again the des Vanneaulx applied to the Abbé Pascal, the prison chaplain. The Abbé Pascal was not deficient in the peculiar quality which gains a priest a hearing from a prisoner. In the name of religion, he braved Tascheron's transports of rage, and strove to utter a few words amidst the storms that convulsed that powerful nature. But the struggle between spiritual paternity and the tempest of uncontrolled passions was too much for poor Abbé Pascal; he retired from it defeated and worn out.

"That is a man who has found his heaven here on earth," the old priest murmured softly to himself.

Then little Mme. des Vanneaulx thought of approaching the criminal herself, and took counsel of her friends. The Sieur des Vanneaulx talked of compromise. Being at his wits' end, he even betook himself to M. de Granville, and suggested that he (M. de Granville) should intercede with the King for his uncle's murderer if only, *if only*, the murderer would hand over those hundred thousand francs to the proper persons. The *avocat général* retorted that the King's majesty would not

stoop to haggle with criminals. Then the des Vanneaulx tried Tascheron's counsel, offering him twenty per cent. on the total amount as an inducement to recover it for them. This lawyer was the one creature whom Tascheron could see without flying into a fury; him, therefore, the next-of-kin empowered to offer ten per cent. to the murderer, to be paid over to the man's family. But in spite of the mutilations which these beavers were prepared to make in their heritage, in spite of the lawyer's eloquence, Tascheron continued obdurate. Then the des Vanneaulx, waxing wroth, anathematized the condemned man and called down curses upon his head.

"He is not only a murderer, he has no sense of decency!" cried they, in all seriousness, ignorant though they were of the famous *Plaint of Fualdès*. The Abbé Pascal had totally failed, the application for a reversal of judgment seemed likely to succeed no better, the man would go to the guillotine, and then all would be lost.

"What good will our money be to him where he is going?" they wailed. "A murder you can understand, but to steal a thing that is of no use! The thing is inconceivable. What times we live in, to be sure, when people of quality take an interest in such a bandit! He does not deserve it."

"He has very little sense of honor," said Mme. des Vanneaulx.

"Still, suppose that giving up the money should compromise his sweetheart!" suggested an old maid.

"We would keep his secret," cried the Sieur des Vanneaulx.

"But then you would become accessories after the fact," objected a lawyer.

"Oh! the scamp!" This was the Sieur des Vanneaulx's conclusion of the whole matter.

The des Vanneaulx's debates were reported with some amusement to Mme. Graslin by one of her circle, a very clever woman, a dreamer and idealist, for whom everything must be faultless. The speaker regretted the condemned

man's fury; she would have had him cold, calm, and dignified.

"Do you not see," said Véronique, "that he is thrusting temptation aside and baffling their efforts. He is deliberately acting like a wild beast."

"Besides," objected the Parisienne in exile, "he is not a gentleman, he is only a common man."

"If he had been a gentleman, it would have been all over with that unknown woman long ago," Mme. Graslin answered.

These events, twisted and tortured in drawing-rooms and family circles, made to bear endless constructions, picked to pieces by the most expert tongues in the town, all contributed to invest the criminal with a painful interest, when, two months later, the appeal for mercy was rejected by the Supreme Court. How would he bear himself in his last moments? He had boasted that he would make so desperate a fight for his life that it was impossible that he should lose it. Would he confess? Would his conduct belie his language? Which side would win their wagers? Are you going to be there? Are you not going? How are we to go? As a matter of fact, the distance from the prison of Limoges to the place of execution is very short, sparing the dreadful ordeal of a long transit to the prisoner, but also limiting the number of fashionable spectators. The prison is in the same building as the Palais de Justice, at the corner of the Rue du Palais and the Rue du Pont-Hérisson. The Rue du Palais is the direct continuation of the short Rue de Monte-à-Regret which leads to the Place d'Aîne or des Arênes, where executions take place (hence, of course, its name). The way, as has been said, is very short, consequently there are not many houses along it, and but few windows. What persons of fashion would care to mingle with the crowd in the square on such an occasion?

But the execution expected from day to day was day after day put off, to the great astonishment of the town, and for the following reasons: The pious resignation of the greatest

scoundrels on their way to death is a triumph reserved for the Church, and a spectacle which seldom fails to impress the crowd. Setting the interests of Christianity totally aside (although this is a principle never lost sight of by the Church), the condemned man's repentance is too strong a testimony to the power of religion for the clergy not to feel that a failure on these conspicuous occasions is a heart-breaking misfortune. This feeling was aggravated in 1829, for party spirit ran high and poisoned everything, however small, which had any bearing on politics. The Liberals were in high glee at the prospect of a public collapse of the "priestly party," an epithet invented by Montlosier, a Royalist who went over to the Constitutionals and was carried by his new associates further than he intended. A party, in its corporate capacity, is guilty of disgraceful actions which in an individual would be infamous, and so it happens that when one man stands out conspicuous as the expression and incarnation of that party, in the eyes of the crowd he is apt to become a Robespierre, a Judge Jeffreys, a Laubardemont—a sort of altar of expiation to which others equally guilty attach *ex votos* in secret.

There was an understanding between the episcopal authorities and the police authorities, and still the execution was put off, partly to secure a triumph for religion, but quite as much for another reason—by the aid of religion justice hoped to arrive at the truth. The power of the public prosecutor, however, had its limits; sooner or later the sentence must be carried out; and the very Liberals who insisted, for the sake of opposition, on Tascheron's innocence, and had tried to upset the case, now began to grumble at the delay. Opposition, when systematic, is apt to fall into inconsistencies; for the point in question is not to be in the right, but to have a stone always ready to sling at authority. So towards the beginning of August, the hand of authority was forced by the clamor (often a chance sound echoed by empty heads) called public opinion. The execution was announced.

In this extremity the Abbé Dutheil took it upon himself to suggest a last resource to the bishop. One result of the success of this plan will be the introduction of another actor in the judicial drama, the extraordinary personage who forms a connecting link between the different groups in it; the greatest of all figures in this *Scène;* the guide who should hereafter bring Mme. Graslin on a stage where her virtues were to shine forth with the brightest lustre; where she would exhibit a great and noble charity and act the part of a Christian and a ministering angel.

The bishop's palace at Limoges stands on the hillside above the Vienne. The gardens, laid out in terraces supported by solidly-built walls, crowned by balustrades, descend stepwise, following the fall of the land to the river. The sloping ridge rises high enough to give the spectator on the opposite bank the impression that the Faubourg Saint-Étienne nestles at the foot of the lowest terrace of the bishop's garden. Thence, as you walk in one direction, you look out across the river, and in the other along its course through the broad fertile landscape. When the Vienne has flowed westward past the palace gardens, it takes a sudden turn towards Limoges, skirting the Faubourg Saint-Martial in a graceful curve. A little further, and beyond the suburb, it passes a charming country house called the Cluzeau. You can catch a glimpse of the walls from the nearest point of the nearest terrace, a trick of the perspective uniting them with the church towers of the suburb. Opposite the Cluzeau lies the island in the river, with its indented shores, its thickly growing poplars and forest trees, the island which Véronique in her girlhood called the Isle of France. Eastward, the low hills shut in the horizon like the walls of an amphitheatre.

The charm of the situation and the rich simplicity of the architecture of the palace mark it out among the other buildings of a town not conspicuously happy in the choice or employment of its building materials. The view from the

gardens, which attracts travelers in search of the picturesque, had long been familiar to the Abbé Dutheil. He had brought M. de Grancour with him this evening, and went down from terrace to terrace, taking no heed of the sunset shedding its crimson and orange and purple over the balustrades along the steps, the houses on the suburb, and the waters of the river. He was looking for the bishop, who at that moment sat under the vines in a corner of the furthest terrace, taking his dessert, and enjoying the charms of the evening at his ease.

The long shadows cast by the poplars on the island fell like a bar across the river; the sunlight lit up their topmost crests, yellowed somewhat already, and turned the leaves to gold. The glow of the sunset, differently reflected from the different masses of green, composed a glorious harmony of subdued and softened color. A faint evening breeze stirring in the depths of the valley ruffled the surface of the Vienne into a broad sheet of golden ripples that brought out in contrast all the sober hues of the roofs in the Faubourg Saint-Étienne. The church towers and housetops of the Faubourg Saint-Martial were blended in the sunlight with the vine-stems of the trellis. The faint hum of the country town, half-hidden in the re-entering curve of the river, the softness of the air—all sights and sounds combined to steep the prelate in the calm recommended for the digestion by the authors of every treatise on that topic. Unconsciously the bishop fixed his eyes on the right bank of the river, on a spot where the lengthening shadows of the poplars in the island had reached the bank by the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, and darkened the walls of the garden close to the scene of the double murder of old Pingret and the servant; and just as his snug felicity of the moment was troubled by the difficulties which his vicars-general recalled to his recollection, the bishop's expression grew inscrutable by reason of many thoughts. The two subordinates attributed his absence of mind to ennui; but, on the contrary, the bishop had just discovered in the sands of the Vienne the

key to the puzzle, the clue which the des Vanneaulx and the police were seeking in vain.

"My lord," began the Abbé de Grancour, as he came up to the bishop, "everything has failed; we shall have the sorrow of seeing that unhappy Tascheron die in mortal sin. He will bellow the most awful blasphemies; he will heap insults on poor Abbé Pascal; he will spit on the crucifix, and deny everything, even hell-fire."

"He will frighten the people," said the Abbé Dutheil. "The very scandal and horror of it will cover our defeat and our inability to prevent it. So, as I was saying to M. de Grancour as we came, may this scene drive more than one sinner back to the bosom of the Church."

His words seemed to trouble the bishop, who laid down the bunch of grapes which he was stripping on the table, wiped his fingers, and signed to his two vicars-general to be seated.

"The Abbé Pascal has managed badly," said he at last.

"He is quite ill after the last scene with the prisoner," said the Abbé de Grancour. "If he had been well enough to come, we should have brought him with us to explain the difficulties which put all the efforts which your lordship might command out of our power."

"The condemned man begins to sing obscene songs at the top of his voice when he sees one of us; the noise drowns every word as soon as you try to make yourself heard," said a young priest who was sitting beside the bishop.

The young speaker leaned his right elbow on the table, his white hand drooped carelessly over the bunches of grapes as he selected the reddest berries, with the air of being perfectly at home. He had a charming face, and seemed to be either a table companion or a favorite with the bishop, and was, in fact, a favorite and the prelate's table-companion. As the younger brother of the Baron de Rastignac he was connected with the bishop of Limoges by the ties of family relationship and affection. Considerations of fortune had induced the

young man to enter the Church; and the bishop, aware of this, had taken his young relative as his private secretary until such time as advancement might befall him; for the Abbé Gabriel bore a name which predestined him to the highest dignities of the Church.

"Then have you been to see him, my son?" asked the bishop.

"Yes, my lord. As soon as I appeared, the miserable man poured out a torrent of the most disgusting language against you and me; his behavior made it impossible for a priest to stay with him. Will you permit me to offer you a piece of advice, my lord?"

"Let us hear the wisdom which God sometimes puts into the mouth of babes," said the bishop.

"Did he not cause Balaam's ass to speak?" the young Abbé de Rastignac retorted quickly.

"According to some commentators, the ass was not very well aware of what she was saying," the bishop answered, laughing.

Both the vicars-general smiled. In the first place, it was the bishop's joke; and, in the second, it glanced lightly on this young abbé, of whom all the dignitaries and ambitious churchmen grouped about the bishop were envious.

"My advice would be to beg M. de Granville to put off the execution for a few days yet. If the condemned man knew that he owed those days of grace to our intercession, he would perhaps make some show of listening to us, and if he listens——"

"He will persist in his conduct when he sees what comes of it," said the bishop, interrupting his favorite. "Gentlemen," he resumed after a moment's pause, "is the town acquainted with these details?"

"Where will you find the house where they are not discussed?" answered the Abbé de Grancour. "The condition of our good Abbé Pascal since his last interview is matter of common talk at this moment."

"When is Tascheron to be executed?" asked the bishop.

"To-morrow. It is market-day," replied M. de Grancour.

"Gentlemen, religion must not be vanquished," cried the bishop. "The more attention is attracted to this affair, the more determined am I to secure a signal triumph. The Church is passing through a difficult crisis. Miracles are called for here among an industrial population, where sedition has spread itself and taken root far and wide; where religious and monarchical doctrines are regarded with a critical spirit; where nothing is respected by a system of analysis derived from Protestantism by the so-called Liberalism of to-day, which is free to take another name to-morrow. Go to M. de Granville, gentlemen, he is with us heart and soul; tell him that we ask for a few days' respite. I will go to see the unhappy man."

"You, my lord!" cried the Abbé de Rastignac. "Will not too much be compromised if *you* fail? You should only go when success is assured."

"If my lord bishop will permit me to give my opinion," said the Abbé Dutheil, "I think that I can suggest a means of securing the triumph of religion under these melancholy circumstances."

The bishop's response was a somewhat cool sign of assent, which showed how low his vicar-general's credit stood with him.

"If any one has any ascendency over this rebellious soul, and may bring it to God, it is M. Bonnet, the curé of the village where the man was born," the Abbé Dutheil went on.

"One of your protégés," remarked the bishop.

"My lord, M. Bonnet is one of those who recommend themselves by their militant virtues and evangelical labors."

This answer, so modest and simple, was received with a silence which would have disconcerted any one but the Abbé Dutheil. He had alluded to merits which had been over-

looked, and the three who heard him chose to regard the words as one of the meek sarcasms, neatly put, impossible to resent, in which churchmen excel, accustomed as they are by their training to say the thing they mean without transgressing the severe rules laid down for them in the least particular. But it was nothing of the kind; the abbé never thought of himself. Then—

"I have heard of Saint Aristides for too long," the bishop made answer, smiling. "If I were to leave his light under a bushel, it would be injustice or prejudice on my part. Your Liberals cry up your M. Bonnet as if he were one of themselves; I mean to see this rural apostle and judge for myself. Go to the public prosecutor, gentlemen, and ask him in my name for a respite; I will await his answer before despatching our well-beloved Abbé Gabriel to Montégnac to fetch the holy man for us. We will put his beatitude in the way of working a miracle——"

The Abbé Dutheil flushed red at these words from the prelate-noble, but he chose to disregard any slight that they might contain for him. Both vicars-general silently took their leave, and left the greatly perplexed bishop alone with his young friend.

"The secrets of the confessional which we require lie buried there, no doubt," said the bishop, pointing to the shadows of the poplars where they reached a lonely house half-way between the island and the Faubourg Saint-Étienne.

"So I have always thought," Gabriel answered. "I am not a judge, and I do not care to play the spy; but if I had been the examining magistrate, I should know the name of the woman who is trembling now at every sound, at every word that is uttered, compelled all the while to wear a smooth, unclouded brow under pain of accompanying the condemned man to his death. Yet she has nothing to fear. I have seen the man—he will carry the secret of his passionate love to his grave."

"Crafty young man!" said the bishop, pinching his secretary's ear, as he pointed out a spot between the island in the river and the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, lit up by a last red ray from the sunset. The young priest's eyes had been fixed on it as he spoke. "Justice ought to have searched there; is it not so?"

"I went to see the criminal to try the effect of my guess upon him; but he is watched by spies, and, if I had spoken audibly, I might have compromised the woman for whom he is dying."

"Let us keep silent," said the bishop. "We are not concerned with man's justice. One head will fall, and that is enough. Besides, sooner or later, the secret will return to the Church."

The perspicacity of the priest, fostered by the habit of meditation, is far keener than the insight of the lawyer and the detective. After all the preliminary investigations, after the legal inquiry, and the trial at the assizes, the bishop and his secretary, looking down from the height of the terrace, had in truth, by dint of contemplation, succeeded in discovering details as yet unknown.

M. de Granville was playing his evening game of whist in Mme. Graslin's house, and his visitors were obliged to wait for his return. It was near midnight before his decision was known at the palace, and by two o'clock in the morning the Abbé Gabriel started out for Montégnac in the bishop's own traveling carriage, loaned to him for the occasion. The place is about nine leagues distant from Limoges; it lies under the mountains of the Corrèze, in that part of Limousin which borders on the department of the Creuse. All Limoges, when the abbé left it, was in a ferment of excitement over the execution promised for this day, an expectation destined to be balked once more.

III.

THE CURÉ OF MONTÉGNAC.

In priests and fanatics there is a certain tendency to insist upon the very utmost to which they are legally entitled where their interests are concerned. Is this a result of poverty? Is an egoism which favors the development of greed one of the consequences of isolation upon a man's character? Or are shrewd business habits, as well as parsimony, acquired by a course of management of charitable funds? Each temperament suggests a different explanation, but the fact remains the same whether it lurks (as not seldom happens) beneath urbane good-humor, or (and equally often) is openly manifested; and the difficulty of putting the hand in the pocket is evidently increasingly felt on a journey.

Gabriel de Rastignac, the prettiest young gentleman who had bowed his head before the altar of the tabernacle for some time, only gave thirty sous to the postillions, and traveled slowly accordingly. The postillion tribe drive with all due respect a bishop who does but pay twice the amount demanded of ordinary mortals, but, at the same time, they are careful not to damage the episcopal equipage, for fear of getting themselves into trouble. The abbé, traveling alone for the first time in his life, spoke mildly at each relay—

"Just drive on a little faster, can't you?"

"You can't get the whip to work without a little palm oil," an old postillion replied, and the young abbé, much mystified, fell back in a corner of the carriage. He amused himself by watching the landscape through which they were traveling, and walked up a hill now and again on the winding road from Bordeaux to Lyons.

Five leagues beyond Limoges the country changes. You have left behind the charming low hills about the Vienne

and the fair meadow slopes of Limousin, which sometimes (and this particularly about Saint-Léonard) put you in mind of Switzerland. You find yourself in a wilder and sterner district. Wide moors, vast steppes without grass or herds of horses, stretch away to the mountains of the Corrèze on the horizon. The far-off hills do not tower above the plain, a grandly, rent wall of rock like the Alps in the south; you look in vain for the desolate peaks and glowing gorges of the Apennine, or for the majesty of the Pyrenees—the curving wave-like swell of the hills of the Corrèze bears witness to their origin, to the peaceful slow subsidence of the waters which once overwhelmed this country.

These undulations, characteristic of this, and, indeed, of most of the hill districts of France, have perhaps, contributed quite as much as the climate to gain for the land its title of "the kindly," which Europe has confirmed. But it is a dreary transition country which separates Limousin from the provinces of Marche and Auvergne. In the mind of the poet and thinker who crosses it, it calls up visions of the Infinite (a terrible thought for certain souls); a woman looking out on its monotonous sameness is driven to muse; and to those who must dwell with the wilderness, nature shows herself stubborn, peevish, and barren; 'tis a churlish soil that covers these wide gray plains.

Only the neighborhood of a great capital can work such a miracle as transformed Brie during the last two centuries. Here there is no large settlement which sometimes puts life into the waste lands which the agricultural economist regards as blanks in creation, spots where civilization groans aghast, and the tourist finds no inns and a total absence of that picturesqueness in which he delights.

But to lofty spirits the moors, the shadows needed in the vast picture of nature, are not repellent. In our own day, Fenimore Cooper, owner of so melancholy a talent, has set forth the mysterious charm of great solitudes magnificently in

"The Prairie." But the wastes shunned by every form of plant life, the barren soil covered with loose stones and water-borne pebbles, the "bad lands" of the earth, are so many challenges to civilization. France must face her difficulties and find a solution for them, as the British are doing; their patient heroism is turning the most barren heather-land in Scotland into productive farms. Left to their primitive desolation, these fallows produce a crop of discouragement, of idleness, of poor physique from insufficient food, and crime, whenever want grows too clamorous. In these few words, you have the past history of Montégnac.

What is there to be done when a waste on so vast a scale is neglected by the administration, deserted by the nobles, execrated by workers? Its inhabitants declare war against a social system which refuses to do its duty, and so it was in former times with the folk of Montégnac. They lived, like Highlanders, by murder and rapine. At sight of that country, a thoughtful observer could readily imagine how that only twenty years ago the people of the village were at war with society at large.

The wide plateau, cut away on one side by the Vienne, on another by the lovely valleys of Marche, bounded by the Auvergne to the east, and shut in by the mountains of the Corrèze on the south, is very much like (agriculture apart) the uplands of Beauce, which separate the basin of the Loire from the basin of the Seine, or the plateaux of Touraine or of Berri, or many others of these facets, as it were, on the surface of France, so numerous that they demand the careful attention of the greatest administrators.

It is an unheard-of thing that while people complain that the masses are discontented with their condition, and constantly aspiring towards social elevation, a government cannot find a remedy for this in a country like France, where statistics show that there are millions of acres of land lying idle, and in some cases (as in Berri) covered with leaf mold seven or

eight feet thick! A good deal of this land which should support whole villages, and yield a magnificent return to cultivation, is the property of pig-headed communes which refuse to sell to speculators because, forsooth, they wish to preserve the right of grazing some hundred cows upon it. Impotence is writ large over all these lands without a purpose. Yet every bit of land will grow some special thing, and neither arms nor will to work are lacking, but administrative ability and conscience.

Hitherto the upland districts of France have been sacrificed to the valleys. The government has given its fostering protection to districts well able to take care of themselves. But most of these unlucky wastes have no water supply, the first requisite for cultivation. The mists which might fertilize the gray dead soil by depositing their oxides are swept across them by the wind. There are no trees to arrest the clouds and suck up their nourishing moisture. A few plantations here and there would be a godsend in such places. The poor folk who live in these wilds, at a practically impossible distance from the nearest large town, are without a market for their produce—if they have any. Scattered about on the edges of a forest left to nature, they pick up their firewood and eke out a precarious existence by poaching; in the winter starvation stares them in the face. They have not capital enough to grow wheat, for so poor are they that ploughs and cattle are beyond their means; and they live on chestnuts. If you have wandered through some Natural History Museum and felt the indescribable depression which comes on after a prolonged study of the unvarying brown hues of the European specimens, you will perhaps understand how the perpetual contemplation of the gray plains must affect the moral conditions of the people who live face to face with such disheartening sterility. There is no shadow, nor contrast, nor coolness; no sight to stir associations which gladden the mind. One could hail a stunted crab-tree there as a friend.

The high-road forked at length, and a cross-road branched off towards the village a few leagues distant. Montégnac lying (as its name indicates) at the foot of a ridge of hill is the chief village of a canton on the borders of Haute-Vienne. The hillside above belongs to the township which encircles hill country and plain; indeed, the commune is a miniature Scotland, and has its highlands and its lowlands. Only a league away, at the back of the hill which shelters the township, rises the first peak of the chain of the Corrèze, and all the country between is filled by the great forest of Montégnac, crowning the slope above the village, covering the little valleys and bleak undulating land (left bare in patches here and there), climbing the peak itself, stretching away to the north in a long narrow strip which ends abruptly in a point on a steep bank above the Aubusson road. That bit of steep bank rises above a deep hollow through which the high-road runs from Lyons to Bordeaux. Many a time coaches and foot-passengers have been stopped in the darkest part of the dangerous ravine; and the robberies nearly always went without punishment. The situation favored the highwaymen, who escaped by paths well known to them into their forest fastnesses. In such a country the investigations of justice find little trace. People accordingly shunned that route.

Without traffic neither commerce nor industry can exist; the exchange of intellectual and material wealth becomes impossible. The visible wonders of civilization are in all cases the result of the application of ideas as old as man. A thought in the mind of man—that is from age to age the starting-point and the goal of all our civilization. The history of Montégnac is a proof of this axiom of social science. When the administration found itself in a position to consider the pressing practical needs of the country, the strip of forest was felled, gendarmes were posted to accompany the diligence through the two stages; but, to the shame of the gendarmerie be it said, it was not the sword but a voice, not Corporal Chervin

but Parson Bonnet, who won the battle of civilization by reforming the lives of the people. The curé, seized with pity and compassion for those poor souls, tried to regenerate them, and persevered till he gained his end.

After another hour's journey across the plains where flints succeed to dust, and dust to flints, and flocks of partridges abode in peace, rising at the approach of the carriage with a heavy whirring sound of their wings, the Abbé Gabriel, like most other travelers who pass that way, hailed the sight of the roofs of the township with a certain pleasure. As you enter Montégnac you are confronted by one of the queer posthouses, not to be found out of France. The signboard, nailed up with four nails above a sorry empty stable, is a rough oaken plank on which a pretentious postillion has carved an inscription, darkening the letters with ink: "Poast hosses," it runs. The door is nearly always wide open. The threshold is a plank set up edgewise in the earth to keep the rain-water out of the stable, the floor being below the level of the road outside. Within, the traveler sees, to his sorrow, the harness, worn, mildewed, mended with string, ready to give way at the first tug. The horses are probably not to be seen; they are at work on the land, or out at grass, anywhere and everywhere but in the stable. If by any chance they are within they are feeding. If the horses are ready, the postillion has gone to see his aunt or his cousin, or gone to sleep, or he is getting in his hay. Nobody knows where he is; you must wait while somebody goes to find him. He does not stir until he has a mind; and when he comes, it takes him an eternity to find his waistcoat or his whip, or to rub down his cattle. The buxom dame in the doorway fidgets about even more restlessly than the traveler, and forestalls any outburst on his part by bestirring herself a good deal more quickly than the horses. She personates the postmistress whose husband is out in the fields.

It was in such a stable as this that the bishop's favorite left his traveling carriage. The walls looked like maps; the

thatched roof, as gay with flowers as a garden bed, bent under the weight of its growing house-leeks. He asked the woman of the place to have everything in readiness for his departure in an hour's time, and inquired of her his way to the parsonage. The good woman pointed out a narrow alley between two houses. That was the way to the church, she said, and he would find the parsonage hard by.

While the abbé climbed the steep path paved with cobblestones between the hedgerows on either side, the postmistress fell to questioning the postboy. Every postboy along the road from Limoges had passed on to his brother whip the surmises of the first postillion concerning the bishop's intentions. So while Limoges was turning out of bed and talking of the execution of old Pingret's murderer, the country-folk all along the road were spreading the news of the pardon procured by the bishop for the innocent prisoner, and prattling of supposed miscarriages of justice, insomuch that when Jean-François came to the scaffold at a later day, he was likely to be regarded as a martyr.

The Abbé Gabriel went some few paces along the footpath, red with autumn leaves, dark with blackberries and sloes; then he turned and stood, acting on the instinct which prompts us to make a survey of any strange place, an instinct which we share with the horse and dog. The reason of the choice of the site of Montégnac was apparent; several streams broke out of the hillside, and a small river flowed along by the departmental road which leads from the township to the prefecture. Like the rest of the villages in this plateau, Montégnac is built of blocks of clay, dried in the sun; if a fire broke out in a cottage, it is possible that it might find it earth and leave it brick. The roofs are of thatch; altogether, it was a poor-looking place that the bishop's messenger saw. Below Montégnac lay fields of rye, potatoes, and turnips, land won from the plain. In the meadows on the lowest slope of the hillside, watered by artificial channels, were

some of the celebrated breed of Limousin horses; a legacy (so it is said) of the Arab invaders of France, who crossed the Pyrenees to meet death from the battle-axes of Charles Martel's Franks, between Poitiers and Tours. Up above on the heights the soil looked parched. Now and again the reddish scorched surface, burnt bare by the sun, indicated the arid soil which the chestnuts love. The water, thriftily distributed along the irrigation channels, was only sufficient to keep the meadows fresh and green; on these hillsides grows the fine short grass, the delicate sweet pasture that builds you up a breed of horses delicate and impatient of control, fiery, but not possessed of much staying-power; unexcelled in their native district, but apt to change their character when they change their country.

Some young mulberry trees indicated an intention of growing silk. Like most villages, Montégnac could only boast a single street, to wit, the road that ran through it; but there was an Upper and Lower Montégnac on either side of it, each cut in two by a little pathway running at right angles to the road. The hillside below a row of houses on the ridge was gay with terraced gardens which rose from a level of several feet above the road, necessitating flights of steps, sometimes of earth, sometimes paved with cobble-stones. A few old women, here and there, who sat spinning or looking after the children, put some human interest into the picture, and kept up a conversation between Upper and Lower Montégnac by talking to each other across the road, usually quiet enough. In this way news traveled pretty quickly from one end of the township to the other. The gardens were full of fruit trees, cabbages, onions, and potherbs; beehives stood in rows along the terraces.

A second parallel row of cottages lay below the road, their gardens sloping down towards the little river which flowed through fields of thick-growing hemp, the fruit trees which love damp places marking its course. A few cottages, the

posthouse among them, nestled in a hollow, a situation well adapted for the weavers who lived in them, and almost every house was overshadowed by the walnut trees, which flourish best in heavy soil. At the further end of Montégnac, and on the same side of the road, stood a house larger and more carefully kept than the rest; it was the largest of a group equally neat in appearance, a little hamlet, in fact, separated from the township by its gardens, and known then, as to-day, by the name of "Taschérons.'" The commune was not much in itself, but some thirty outlying farms belonged to it. In the valley several "water-lanes" like those in Berri and Marche marked out the course of the little streams with green fringes. The whole commune looked like a green ship in the midst of a wide sea.

Whenever a house, a farm, a village, or a district passes from a deplorable state to a more satisfactory condition of things, though as yet scarcely to be called strikingly prosperous, the life there seems so much a matter of course, so natural, that at first sight a spectator can never guess how much toil went to the founding of that not extraordinary prosperity; what an amount of effort, vast in proportion to the strength that undertook it; what heroic persistence lies there buried and out of sight, effort and persistence without which the visible changes could not have taken place. So the young abbé saw nothing unusual in the pleasant view before his eyes; he little knew what that country had been before M. Bonnet came to it.

He turned and went a few paces further up the path, and soon came in sight of the church and parsonage, about six hundred feet above the gardens of Upper Montégnac. Both buildings, when first seen in the distance, were hard to distinguish among the ivy-covered stately ruins of the old Castle of Montégnac, a stronghold of the Navarreins in the twelfth century. The parsonage house had every appearance of being built in the first instance for a steward or a head gamekeeper.

It stood at the end of a broad terrace planted with lime trees, and overlooked the whole countryside. The ravages of time bore witness to the antiquity of the flight of steps and the walls which supported the terrace, the stones had been forced out of place by the constant imperceptible thrusting of plant life in the crevices, until tall grasses and wild flowers had taken root among them. Every step was covered with a dark-green carpet of fine close moss. The masonry, solid though it was, was full of rifts and cracks, where wild plants of the pellitory and camomile tribe were growing ; the maiden-hair fern sprang from the loopholes in thick masses of shaded green. The whole face of the wall, in fact, was hung with the finest and fairest tapestry, damasked with bracken fronds, purple snap-dragons with their golden stamens, blue borage, and brown fern and moss, till the stone itself was only seen by glimpses here and there through its moist, cool covering.

Up above, upon the terrace, the clipped box borders formed geometrical patterns in a pleasure garden framed by the parsonage house, and behind the parsonage rose the crags, a pale background of rock, on which a few drooping, feathery trees struggled to live. The ruins of the castle towered above the house and the church.

The parsonage itself, built of flints and mortar, boasted a single story and garrets above, apparently empty, to judge by the dilapidated windows on either gable under the high-pitched roof. A couple of rooms on the ground floor, separated by a passage with a wooden staircase at the farther end of it, two more rooms on the second floor, and a little lean-to kitchen built against the side of the house in the yard, where a stable and coach-house stood perfectly empty, useless, abandoned—this was all. The kitchen garden lay between the house and the church ; a ruinous covered passage led from the parsonage to the sacristy.

The young abbé's eyes wandered over the place. He noted the four windows with their leaded panes, the brown

moss-grown walls, the rough wooden door, so full of splits and cracks that it looked like a bundle of matches, and the adorable quaintness of it all by no means took his fancy. The grace of the plant life which covered the roofs, the wild climbing flowers that sprang from the rotting wooden sills and cracks in the wall, the trails and tendrils of the vines, covered with tiny clusters of grapes, which found their way in through the windows, as if they were fain to carry merriment and laughter into the house—all this he beheld, and thanked his stars that his way led to a bishopric, and not to a country parsonage.

The house, open all day long, seemed to belong to every one. The Abbé Gabriel walked into the dining-room, which opened into the kitchen. The furniture which met his eyes was poor—an old oak table with four twisted legs, an easy-chair covered with tapestry, a few wooden chairs, and an old chest, which did duty as a sideboard. There was no one in the kitchen except the cat, the sign of a woman in the house. The other room was the parlor ; glancing round it, the young priest noticed that the easy-chairs were made of unpolished wood, and covered with tapestry. The paneling of the walls, like the rafters, was of chestnut-wood, and black as ebony. There was a timepiece in a green case painted with flowers, a table covered with a worn green cloth, one or two chairs, and on the mantle-shelf an Infant Jesus in wax under a glass shade set between two candlesticks. The hearth, surrounded by a rough wooden moulding, was hidden by a paper screen representing the Good Shepherd with a sheep on his shoulder. In this way, doubtless, one of the family of the mayor, or of the justice of the peace, endeavored to express his acknowledgments of the care bestowed on his training.

The state of the house was something piteous. The walls, which had once been lime-washed, were discolored here and there, and rubbed and darkened up to the height of a man's head. The wooden staircase, with its heavy balustrades,

neatly kept though it was, looked as though it must totter if any one set foot on it. At the end of the passage, just opposite the front door, another door stood open, giving the Abbé Gabriel an opportunity of surveying the kitchen garden, shut in by the wall of the old rampart, built of the white crumbling stone of the district. Fruit trees in full bearing had been trained espalier-fashion along this side of the garden, but the long trellises were falling to pieces, and the vine-leaves were covered with blight.

The abbé went back through the house, and walked along the paths in the front garden. Down below the magnificent wide view of the valley was spread out before his eyes, a sort of oasis on the edge of the great plain, which, in the light morning mists, looked something like a waveless sea. Behind, and rather to one side, the great forest stretched away to the horizon, the bronzed mass making a contrast with the plains, and on the other hand the church and the castle perched on the crag stood sharply out against the blue sky. As the Abbé Gabriel paced the tiny paths among the box-edged diamonds, circles, and stars, crunching the gravel beneath his boots, he looked from point to point at the scene; over the village, where already a few groups of gazers had formed to stare at him, at the valley in the morning light, the quick-set hedges that marked the ways, the little river flowing under its willows, in such contrast with the infinite of the plains. Gradually his impressions changed the current of his thoughts. He admired the quietness, he felt the influences of the pure air, of the peace inspired by a glimpse of a life of biblical simplicity; and with these came a dim sense of the beauty of that life. He went back again to look at its details with a more serious curiosity.

A little girl, left in charge of the house no doubt, but busy pilfering in the garden, came back at the sound of a man's shoes creaking on the flagged pavement of the ground-floor rooms. In her confusion at being caught with fruit in her

hand and between her teeth, she made no answer whatever to the questions put to her by this abbé—young, handsome, daintily arrayed. The child had never believed it possible that such an abbé could exist—radiant in fine lawn, neat as a new pin, and dressed in fine black cloth without a speck or a crease.

"M. Bonnet?" she echoed at last. "M. Bonnet is saying mass, and Mlle. Ursule is gone to the church."

The covered passage from the house to the sacristy had escaped the Abbé Gabriel's notice; so he went down the path again to enter the church by the principal door. The church porch was a sort of pent-house facing the village, set at the top of a flight of worn and disjointed steps, overlooking a square below; planted with the great elm trees which date from the time of the Protestant Sully, and full of channels washed by the rains.

The church itself, one of the poorest in France, where churches are sometimes very poor, was not unlike those huge barns which boast a roof above the door, supported by brick pillars or tree-trunks. Like the parsonage house, it was built of rubble, the square tower being roofed with round tiles; but nature had covered the bare walls with the richest tracery mouldings, and made them fairer still with color and light and shade, carving her lines and disposing her masses, showing all the craftsman's cunning of a Michel Angelo in her work. The ivy clambered over both sides, its sinewy stems clung to the walls till they were covered, beneath the green leaves, with as many veins as any anatomical diagram. Under this mantle, wrought by time to hide the wounds which time had made, damasked by autumn flowers that grew in the crevices, nestled the singing birds. The rose window in the west front was bordered with blue harebells, like the first page of some richly-painted missal. There were fewer flowers on the north side, which communicated with the parsonage, though even there there were patches of crimson moss on the gray stone, but

the south wall and the apse were covered with many-colored blossoms; there were a few saplings rooted in the cracks, notably an almond-tree, the symbol of hope. Two giant firs grew up close to the wall of the apse, and served as lightning-conductors. A low ruinous wall repaired and maintained at elbow height with fallen fragments of its own masonry ran round the churchyard. In the midst of the space stood an iron cross mounted on a stone pedestal, strewn with sprigs of box blessed at Easter, a reminder of a touching Christian rite, now fallen into disuse except in country places. Only in little villages and hamlets does the priest go at Eastertide to bear to his dead the tidings of the Resurrection—"You will live again in happiness." Here and there above the grass-covered graves rose a rotten wooden cross.

The inside was in every way in keeping with the picturesque neglect outside of the poor church, where all the ornament had been given by time, grown charitable for once. Within, your eyes turned at once to the roof. It was lined with chestnut-wood and sustained at equal distances by strong king-posts set on cross-beams; age had imparted to it the richest tones which old woods can take in Europe. The four walls were lime-washed and bare of ornament. Poverty had made unconscious iconoclasts of these worshipers.

Four pointed windows in the side walls let in the light through their leaded panes; the floor was of brick; the seats, wooden benches. The tomb-shaped altar bore for ornament a great crucifix, beneath which stood a tabernacle in walnut-wood (its mouldings brightly polished and clean), eight candlesticks (the candles thriftily made of painted wood), and a couple of china vases full of artificial flowers, things that a broker's man would have declined to look at, but which must serve for God. The lamp in the shrine was simply a floating-light, like a night-light, set in an old silver-plated holy water stoup, hung from the ceiling by silken cords brought from the wreck of some château. The baptismal fonts were of wood

like the pulpit, and a sort of cage where the church-wardens sat—the patricians of the place. The shrine in the Lady Chapel offered to the admiration of the public two colored lithographs framed in a narrow gilded frame. The altar had been painted white, and adorned with artificial flowers planted in gilded wooden flower-pots set out on a white altar-cloth edged with shabby yellowish lace.

But at the end of the church a long window covered with a red cotton curtain produced a magical effect. The lime-washed walls caught a faint rose-tint from that glowing crimson; it was as if some thought divine shone from the altar to fill the poor place with warmth and light. On one wall of the passage which led into the sacristy the patron saint of the village had been carved in wood and painted—a St. John the Baptist and his sheep, an execrable daub. Yet, in spite of the bareness and poverty of the church, there was about the whole a subdued harmony which appeals to those whose spirits have been finely touched, a harmony of the visible and invisible emphasized by the coloring. The rich dark-brown tints of the wood made an admirable relief to the pure white of the walls, and both blended with the triumphant crimson of the chancel window, an austere trinity of color which recalled the great doctrine of the Catholic Church.

If surprise was the first feeling called forth by the sight of this miserable house of God, pity and admiration followed quickly upon it. Did it not express the poverty of those who worshiped there? Was it not in keeping with the quaint simplicity of the parsonage? And it was clean and carefully kept. You breathed, as it were, an atmosphere of the simple virtues of the fields; nothing within spoke of neglect. Primitive and homely though it was, it was clothed in prayer; a soul pervaded it which you felt, though you could not explain how.

The Abbé Gabriel slipped in softly, so as not to interrupt the meditations of two groups on the front benches before the

high-altar, which was railed off from the nave by a balustrade of the inevitable chestnut-wood, roughly made enough, and covered with a white cloth for the communion. Just above the space hung the lamp. Some score of peasant-folk on either side were so deeply absorbed in passionate prayer, that they paid no heed to the stranger as he walked up the church in the narrow gangway between the rows of benches. As the Abbé Gabriel stood beneath the lamp, he could see into the two chancels which completed the cross of the ground-plan; one of them led to the sacristy, the other to the churchyard. It was in this latter, near the graves, that a whole family clad in black were kneeling on the brick floor, for there were no benches in this part of the church. The abbé bent before the altar on the step of the balustrade and knelt to pray, giving a side glance at this sight, which was soon explained. The Gospel was read; the curé took off his chasuble and came down from the altar towards the railing; and the abbé, who had foreseen this, slipped away and stood close to the wall before M. Bonnet could see him. The clock struck ten.

"My brethren," said the curé in a faltering voice, "even at this moment, a child of this parish is paying his forfeit to man's justice by submitting to its extreme penalty. We offer the holy sacrifice of the mass for the repose of his soul. Let us all pray together to God to beseech Him not to forsake that child in his last moments, to entreat that repentance here on earth may find in heaven the mercy which has been refused to it here below. The ruin of this unhappy child, on whom we had counted most surely to set a good example, can only be attributed to a lapse from religious principles——"

The curé was interrupted by the sound of sobbing from the group of mourners in the transept; and by the paroxysm of grief the young priest knew that this was the Tascheron family, though he had never seen them before. The two foremost among them were old people of seventy years at least. Their faces, swarthy as a Florentine bronze, were covered with deep

impassive lines. Both of them, in their old patched garments, stood like statues close against the wall; evidently this was the condemned man's grandfather and grandmother. Their red glassy eyes seemed to shed tears of blood; the old arms trembled so violently that the sticks on which they leaned made a faint sound of scratching on the bricks. Behind them the father and mother, their faces hidden in their handkerchiefs, burst into tears. About the four heads of the family knelt two married daughters with their husbands, then three sons, stupefied with grief. Five kneeling little ones, the oldest not more than seven years of age, understood nothing probably of all that went on, but looked and listened with the apparently torpid curiosity, which in the peasant is often a process of observation carried (so far as the outward and visible is concerned) to the highest possible pitch. Last of all came the poor girl Denise, who had been imprisoned by justice, the martyr to sisterly love; she was listening with an expression which seemed to betoken incredulity and straying thoughts. To her it seemed impossible that her brother should die. Her face was a wonderful picture of another face, that of one among the three Marys who could not believe that Christ was dead, though she had shared the agony of His passion. Pale and dry-eyed, as is the wont of those who have watched for many nights, her freshness had been withered more by sorrow than by work in the fields; but she still kept the beauty of a country-girl, the full plump figure, the shapely red arms, a perfectly round face, and clear eyes, glittering at that moment with the light of despair in them. Her throat, firm-fleshed and white below the line of sunburned brow, indicated the rich tissue and fairness of the skin beneath the stuff. The two married daughters were weeping; their husbands, patient tillers of the soil, were grave and sad. None of the three sons in their sorrow raised their eyes from the ground.

Only Denise and her mother showed any sign of rebellion

in the harrowing picture of resignation and despairing anguish. The sympathy and sincere and pious commiseration felt by the rest of the villagers for a family so much respected had lent the same expression to all faces, an expression which became a look of positive horror when they gathered from the curé's words that even in that moment the knife would fall. All of them had known the young man from the day of his birth, and doubtless all of them believed him to be incapable of committing the crime laid to his charge. The sobbing which broke in upon the simple and brief address grew so vehement that the curé's voice suddenly ceased, and he invited those present to fervent prayer.

There was nothing in this scene to surprise a priest, but Gabriel de Rastignac was too young not to feel deeply moved by it. He had not as yet put priestly virtues in practice; he knew that a different destiny lay before him; that it would never be his duty to go forth into the social breaches where the heart bleeds at the sight of suffering on every side; his lot would be cast among the upper ranks of the clergy which keep alive the spirit of sacrifice, represent the highest intelligence of the Church, and, when occasion calls for it, display these same virtues of the village curé on the largest scale, like the great bishops of Marseilles and Meaux, the archbishops of Arles and Cambrai. The poor peasants were praying and weeping for one who (as they believed) was even then going to his death in a great public square, before a crowd of people assembled from all parts to see him die, the agony of death made intolerable for him by the weight of shame; there was something very touching in this feeble counterpoise of sympathy and prayer from a few, opposed to the cruel curiosity of the rabble and the curses, not undeserved. The poor church heightened the pathos of the contrast.

The Abbé Gabriel was tempted to go over to the Taschérons and cry, "Your son, your brother has been reprieved!" but he shrank from interrupting the mass; he knew, more-

over, that it was only a reprieve, the execution was sure to take place sooner or later. But he could not follow the service; in spite of himself, he began to watch the pastor of whom the miracle of conversion was expected.

Out of the indications in the parsonage house, Gabriel de Rastignac had drawn a picture of M. Bonnet in his own mind: He would be short and stout, he thought, with a red, powerful face, a rough workingman, almost like one of the peasants themselves, and tanned by the sun. The reality was very far from this; the Abbé Gabriel found himself in the presence of an equal. M. Bonnet was short, slender, and weakly-looking; yet it was none of these characteristics, but an impassioned face, such a face as we imagine for an apostle, which struck you at a first glance. In shape it was almost triangular; starting from the temples on either side of a broad forehead, furrowed with wrinkles, the meagre outlines of the hollow cheeks met at a point in the chin. In that face, overcast by an ivory tint like the wax of an altar candle, blazed two blue eyes, full of the light of faith and the fires of a living hope. A long, slender, straight nose divided it into two equal parts. The wide mouth spoke even when the full, resolute lips were closed, and the voice which issued thence was one of those which go to the heart. The chestnut hair, thin, smooth, and fine, denoted a poor physique, poorly nourished. The whole strength of the man lay in his will. Such were his personal characteristics. In any other such short hands might have indicated a bent towards material pleasures; perhaps he too, like Socrates, had found evil in his nature to subdue. His thinness was ungainly, his shoulders protruded too much, and he seemed to be knock-kneed; his bust was so over-developed in comparison with his limbs that it gave him something of the appearance of a hunchback without the actual deformity; altogether, to an ordinary observer, his appearance was not prepossessing. Only those who know the miracles of thought and faith and art can recognize and rev-

erence the light that burns in a martyr's eyes, the pallor of steadfastness, the voice of love—all traits of the Curé Bonnet. Here was a man worthy of that early Church which no longer exists save in the pages of the "Martyrology" and in pictures of the sixteenth century; he bore unmistakably the seal of human greatness which most nearly approaches the divine; conviction had set its mark on him, and a conviction brings a salient indefinable beauty into faces made of the commonest human clay; the devout worshiper at any shrine reflects something of its golden glow; even as the glory of a noble love shines like a sort of light from a woman's face. Conviction is human will come to its full strength; and being at once the cause and the effect, conviction impresses the most indifferent, it is a kind of mute eloquence which gains a hold upon the masses.

As the curé came down from the altar, his eyes fell on the Abbé Gabriel, whom he recognized; but when the bishop's secretary appeared in the sacristy, he found no one there but Ursule. Her master had already given his orders. Ursule, a woman of canonical age, asked the Abbé de Rastignac to follow her along the passage through the garden.

"Monsieur le Curé told me to ask you whether you had breakfasted, sir," she said. "You must have started out from Limoges very early this morning to be here by ten o'clock, so I will set about getting breakfast ready. Monsieur l'Abbé will not find the bishop's table here, but we will do our best. M. Bonnet will not be long; he has gone to comfort those poor souls—the Taschérons. Something very terrible is happening to-day to one of their sons."

"But where do the poor people live?" the Abbé Gabriel put in at length. "I must take M. Bonnet back to Limoges with me at once by the bishop's orders. The unhappy man is not to be executed to-day; his lordship has obtained a reprieve——"

"Ah!" cried Ursule, her tongue itching to spread the

news. "There will be plenty of time to take that comfort to the poor things whilst I am getting breakfast ready. The Tascherons live at the other end of the village. You follow the path under the terrace, that will take you to the house."

As soon as the Abbé Gabriel was fairly out of sight, Ursule went down herself to take the tidings to the village, and to obtain the things needed for breakfast.

The curé had learned, for the first time, at the church of a desperate resolve on the part of the Tascherons, made since the appeal had been rejected. They would leave the district; they had already sold all they had, and that very morning the money was to be paid down. Formalities and unforeseen delays had retarded the sale; they had been forced to stay in the countryside after Jean-François was condemned, and every day had been for them a cup of bitterness to drink. The news of the plan, carried out so secretly, had only transpired on the eve of the day fixed for the execution. The Tascherons had meant to leave the place before the fatal day; but the purchaser of their property was a stranger to the canton, a Corrèzien to whom their motives were indifferent, and he on his own part had found some difficulty in getting the money together. So the family had endured the utmost of their misery. So strong was the feeling of their disgrace in these simple folk who had never tampered with conscience, that grandfather and grandmother, daughters and sons-in-law, father and mother, and all who bore the name of Tascheron, or were connected with them, were leaving the place. Every one in the commune was sorry that they should go, and the mayor had gone to the curé, entreating him to use his influence with the poor mourners.

As the law now stands, the father is no longer responsible for his son's crime, and the father's guilt does not attach to his children, a condition of things in keeping with other emancipations which have weakened the paternal power, and contributed to the triumph of that individualism which is

eating the heart of society in our days. The thinker who looks to the future sees the extinction of the spirit of the family; those who drew up the new code have set in its place equality and independent opinion. The family will always be the basis of society; and now the family, as it used to be, exists no longer, it has come of necessity to be a temporary arrangement, continually broken up and reunited only to be separated again; the links between the future and the past are destroyed, the family of an older time has ceased to exist in France. Those who proceeded to the demolition of the old social edifice were logical when they decided that each member of the family should inherit equally, lessening the authority of the father, making of each child the head of a new household, suppressing great responsibilities; but is the social system thus re-edified as solid a structure, with its laws of yesterday unproved by long experience, as the old monarchy was in spite of its abuses? With the solidarity of the family, society has lost that elemental force which Montesquieu discovered and called "honor." Society has isolated its members the better to govern them, and has divided in order to weaken. The social system reigns over so many units, an aggregation of so many ciphers, piled up like grains of wheat in a heap. Can the general welfare take the place of the welfare of the family? Time holds the answer to this great enigma. And yet—the old order still exists, it is so deeply rooted that you find it most alive among the people. It is still an active force in remote districts where "prejudice," as it is called, likewise exists; in old-world nooks where all the members of a family suffer for the crime of one, and the children for the sins of their fathers.

It was this belief which made their own countryside intolerable to the Tascherons. Their profoundly religious natures had brought them to the church that morning, for how was it possible to stay away when the mass was said for their son, and prayer offered that God might bring him to a repentance

which should reopen eternal life to him? and, moreover, must they not take leave of the village altar? But, for all that, their plans were made; and when the curé, who followed them, entered the principal house, he found the bundles made up, ready for the journey. The purchaser was waiting with the money. The notary had just made out the receipt. Out in the yard, in front of the house, stood a country cart ready to take the old people and the money and Jean-François' mother. The rest of the family meant to set out on foot that night.

The young abbé entered the room on the ground floor where the whole family were assembled, just as the curé of Montégnac had exhausted all his eloquence. The two old people seemed to have ceased to feel from excess of grief; they were crouching on their bundles in a corner of the room, gazing round them at the old house, which had been a family possession from father to son, at the familiar furniture, at the man who had bought it all, and then at each other, as who should say, "Who would have thought that we should ever have come to this?" For a long time past the old people had resigned their authority to their son, the prisoner's father; and now, like old kings after their abdication, they played the passive part of subjects and children. Tascheron stood upright listening to the curé, to whom he gave answers in a deep voice by monosyllables. He was a man of forty-eight or thereabouts, with a fine face, such as served Titian for his apostles. It was a trustworthy face, gravely honest and thoughtful; a severe profile, a nose at right angles with the brows, blue eyes, a noble forehead, regular features, dark, crisped, stubborn hair, growing in the symmetrical fashion which adds a charm to a visage bronzed by a life of work in the open air—this was the present head of the house. It was easy to see that the curé's arguments were shattered against that resolute will.

Denise was leaning against the bread hutch, watching the

notary, who used it as a writing-table; they had given him the grandmother's armchair. The man who had bought the place sat beside the scrivener. The two married sisters were laying the cloth for the last meal which the old folk would offer or partake of in the old house and in their own country before they set out to live beneath alien skies. The men of the family half-stood, half-sat, propped against the large bedstead with the green serge curtains, while Tascheron's wife, their mother, was whisking an omelette by the fire. The grandchildren crowded about the doorway, and the purchaser's family were outside.

Out of the window you could see the garden, carefully cultivated, stocked with fruit trees; the two old people had planted them—every one. Everything about them, like the old smoke-begrimed room with its black rafters, seemed to share in the pent-up sorrow, which could be read in so many different expressions on the different faces. The meal was being prepared for the notary, the purchaser, the children, and the men; neither the father, nor mother, nor Denise, nor her sisters cared to satisfy their hunger, their hearts were too heavily oppressed. There was a lofty and heart-rending resignation in this last performance of the duties of country hospitality—the Taschérons, men of an ancient stock, ended as people usually begin, by doing the honors of their house.

The bishop's secretary was impressed by the scene, so simple and natural, yet so solemn, which met his eyes as he came to summon the curé of Montégnac to do the bishop's bidding.

"The good man's son is still alive," Gabriel said, addressing the curé.

At the words, which every one heard in the prevailing silence, the two old people sprang to their feet as if the trumpet had sounded for the last judgment. The mother dropped her frying-pan into the fire. A cry of joy broke from Denise. All the others seemed to be turned to stone in their dull amazement.

"*Jean-François is pardoned!*" The cry came at that moment as from one voice from the whole village, who rushed up to the Taschérons' house. "It is his lordship the bishop."

"I was *sure* of his innocence!" exclaimed the mother.

"The purchase holds good all the same, doesn't it?" asked the buyer, and the notary answered him by a nod.

In a moment the Abbé Gabriel became the point of interest, all eyes were fixed on him; his face was so sad that it was suspected that there was some mistake, but he could not bear to correct it, and went out with the curé. Outside the house he dismissed the crowd by telling those who came round about him that there was no pardon, only a reprieve, and a dismayed silence at once succeeded to the clamor. Gabriel and the curé turned into the house again, and saw a look of anguish on all the faces—the sudden silence in the village had been understood.

"Jean-François has not received his pardon, my friends," said the young abbé, seeing that the blow had been struck, "but my lord bishop's anxiety for his soul is so great that he has put off the execution that your son may not perish to all eternity at least."

"Then is he living?" cried Denise.

The abbé took the curé aside and told him of his parishioner's impiety, of the consequent peril to religion, and what it was that the bishop expected of the curé of Montégnac.

"My lord bishop requires my death," returned the curé. "Already I have refused to go to this unhappy boy when his afflicted family asked me. The meeting and the scene *there* afterwards would shatter me like glass. Let every man do his work. The weakness of my system, or rather the oversensitiveness of my nervous organization, makes it out of the question for me to fulfill these duties of our ministry. I am still a country parson that I may serve my like, in a sphere where nothing more is demanded of me in a Christian life than I can accomplish. I thought very carefully over this



"AH! SAVE HIS SOUL AT LEAST!"

matter, and tried to satisfy these good Taschérons and to do my duty towards this poor boy of theirs; but at the bare thought of mounting the cart with him, the mere idea of being present while the preparations for death were being made, a deadly chill runs through my veins. No one would ask it of a mother; and remember, sir, he is a child of my poor church——"

"Then you refuse to obey the bishop's summons?" asked the Abbé Gabriel.

M. Bonnet looked at him.

"His lordship does not know the state of my health," he said, "nor does he know that my nature rises in revolt against——"

"There are times when, like Belzunce at Marseilles, we are bound to face a certain death," the Abbé Gabriel broke in.

Just at that moment the curé felt that a hand pulled his cassock; he heard sobs, and, turning, saw the whole family on their knees. Old and young, parents and children, men and women, held out their hands to him imploringly; all the voices united in one cry as he showed his flushed face.

"Ah! save his soul at least!"

It was the old grandmother who had caught at the skirt of his cassock and was bathing it with tears.

"I will obey, sir——" No sooner were the words uttered than the curé was forced to sit down; his knees trembled under him. The young secretary explained the nature of Jean-François' frenzy.

"Do you think that the sight of his younger sister might shake him?" he added, as he came to an end.

"Yes, certainly," returned the curé. "Denise, you will go with us."

"So shall I," said the mother.

"No!" shouted the father. "That boy is dead to us. You know that. Not one of us shall see him."

"Do not stand in the way of his salvation," said the

young abbé. "If you refuse us the means of softening him, you take the responsibility of his soul upon yourself. In his present state his death may reflect more discredit on his family than his life."

"She shall go," said the father. "She always interfered when I tried to correct my son, and this shall be her punishment."

The Abbé Gabriel and M. Bonnet went back together to the parsonage. It was arranged that Denise and her mother should be there at the time when the two ecclesiastics should set out for Limoges. As they followed the footpath along the outskirts of Upper Montégnac, the younger man had an opportunity of looking more closely than heretofore in the church at this country parson, so highly praised by the vicar-general. He was favorably impressed almost at once by his companion's simple, dignified manners, by the magic of his voice, and by the words he spoke, in keeping with the voice. The curé had been but once to the palace since the bishop had taken Gabriel de Rastignac as his secretary, so that he had scarcely seen the favorite destined to be a bishop some day; he knew that the secretary had great influence, and yet in the dignified kindness of his manner there was a certain independence, as of the curé whom the Church permits to be in some sort a sovereign in his own parish.

As for the young abbé, his feelings were so far from appearing in his face that they seemed to have hardened it into severity; his expression was not chilly, it was glacial.

A man who could change the disposition and manners of a whole countryside necessarily possessed some faculty of observation, and was more or less of a physiognomist; and even had the curé been wise only in well-doing, he had just given proof of an unusually keen sensibility. The coolness with which the bishop's secretary met his advances and responded to his friendliness struck him at once. He could only account for this reception by some secret dissatisfaction on the other's

part, and looked back over his conduct, wondering how he could have given offense, and in what the offense lay. There was a short embarrassing silence, broken by the Abbé de Rastignac.

"You have a very poor church, Monsieur le Curé," he remarked, aristocratic insolence in his tones and words.

"It is too small," answered M. Bonnet. "For great church festivals the old people sit on benches round the porch, and the younger ones stand in a circle in the square down below; but they are so silent that those outside can hear."

Gabriel was silent for several moments.

"If the people are so devout, why do you leave the church so bare?" he asked at length.

"Alas! sir, I cannot bring myself to spend money on the building when the poor need it. The poor are the church. Besides, I should not fear a visitation from my lord bishop at the Fête-Dieu! Then the poor give the church such things as they have! Did you notice the nails along the walls? They fix a sort of wire trellis work to them, which the women cover with bunches of flowers; the whole church is dressed in flowers, as it were, which keep fresh till the evening. My poor church, which looked so bare to you, is adorned like a bride, and fragrant with sweet scents; the ground is strewn with leaves, and a path in the midst for the passage of the Holy Sacrament is carpeted with rose petals. For that one day I need not fear comparison with Saint Peter's at Rome. The Holy Father has his gold, and I my flowers; to each his miracle. Ah! the township of Montégnac is poor, but it is Catholic. Once upon a time they used to rob travelers, now any one who passes through the place might drop a bag full of money here, and he would find it when he returned home."

"Such a result speaks strongly in your praise," said Gabriel.

"I have had nothing to do with it," answered the curé, flushing at this incisive epigram. "It has been brought about by the Word of God and the sacramental bread."

"Bread somewhat brown," said the Abbé Gabriel, smiling.

"White bread is only suited to the rich," said the curé humbly.

The abbé took both M. Bonnet's hands in his and grasped them cordially.

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Curé," he said; and in a moment the reconciliation was completed by a look in the beautiful blue eyes that went to the depths of the curé's soul.

"My lord bishop recommended me to put your patience and humility to the proof, but I can go no farther. After this little while I see how greatly you have been wronged by the praises of the Liberal party."

Breakfast was ready. Ursule had spread the white cloth, and set new-laid eggs, butter, honey and fruit, cream and coffee, among bunches of flowers on the old-fashioned table in the old-fashioned sitting-room. The window that looked out upon the terrace stood open, framed about with green leaves. Clematis grew about the ledge—white starry blossoms, with tiny sheaves of golden crinkled stamens at their hearts to relieve the white. Jessamine climbed up one side of the window, and nasturtiums on the other; above it, a trail of vine, turning red even now, made a rich setting, which no sculptor could hope to render, so full of grace was that lace-work of leaves outlined against the sky.

"You will find life here reduced to its simplest terms," said the curé, smiling, though his face did not belie the sadness of his heart. "If we had known that you were coming—and who could have foreseen the events which have brought you here?—Ursule would have had some trout for you from the torrent; there is a trout-stream in the forest, and the fish are excellent; but I am forgetting that this is August, and that the Gabou will be dry! My head is very much confused——"

"Are you very fond of this place?" asked the abbé.

"Yes. If God permits, I shall die curé of Montégnac. I could wish that other and distinguished men, who have thought to do better by becoming lay philanthropists, had taken this way of mine. Modern philanthropy is the bane of society; the principles of the Catholic religion are the one remedy for the evils which leaven the body social. Instead of describing the disease and making it worse by jeremiads, each one should have put his hand to the plough and entered God's vineyard as a simple laborer. My task is far from being ended here, sir; it is not enough to have raised the moral standard of the people, who lived in a frightful state of irreligion when I first came here; I would fain die among a generation fully convinced."

"You have only done your duty," the younger man retorted drily; he felt a pang of jealousy in his heart.

The other gave him a keen glance.

"Is this yet another test?" he seemed to say—but aloud he answered humbly, "Yes. I wish every hour of my life," he added, "that every one in the kingdom would do his duty."

The deep underlying significance of those words was still further increased by the tone in which they were spoken. It was clear that here, in this year 1829, was a priest of great intellectual power, great likewise in the simplicity of his life; who, though he did not set up his own judgment against that of his superiors, saw none the less clearly whither the church and the monarchy were going.

When the mother and daughter had come, the abbé left the parsonage and went down to see if the horses had been put in. He was very impatient to return to Limoges. A few minutes later he returned to say that all was in readiness for their departure, and the four set out on their journey. Every creature in Montégnac stood in the road about the posthouse to see them go. The condemned man's mother and sister

said not a word; and as for the two ecclesiastics, there were so many topics to be avoided that conversation was difficult, and they could neither appear indifferent nor try to take a cheerful tone. Still endeavoring to discover some neutral ground for their talk as they traveled on, the influences of the great plain seemed to prolong the melancholy silence.

"What made you accept the position of an ecclesiastic?" Gabriel asked at last out of idle curiosity, as the carriage turned into the high-road.

"I have never regarded my office as a 'position,'" the curé answered simply. "I cannot understand how any one can take holy orders for any save the one indefinable and all-powerful reason—a vocation. I know that not a few have become laborers in the great vineyard with hearts worn out in the service of the passions; men who have loved without hope, or whose hopes have been disappointed; men whose lives were blighted when they laid the wife or the woman they loved in the grave; men grown weary of life in a world where in these times nothing, not even sentiments, are stable and secure, where doubt makes sport of the sweetest certainties, and belief is called superstition.

"Some leave political life in times when to be in power seems to be a sort of expiation, when those who are governed look on obedience as an unfortunate necessity; and very many leave a battlefield without standards where powers, by nature opposed, combine to defeat and dethrone the right. I am not supposing that any man can give himself to God for what he may gain. There are some who appear to see in the clergy a means of regenerating our country; but, according to my dim lights, the patriot priest is a contradiction in terms. The priest should belong to God alone.

"I had no wish to offer to our Father, who yet accepts all things, a broken heart and an enfeebled will; I gave myself to Him whole and entire. It was a touching fancy in the old pagan religion which brought the victim crowned with flowers

to the temple of the gods for sacrifice. There is something in that custom that has always appealed to me. A sacrifice is nothing unless it is made graciously. So the story of my life is very simple, there is not the least touch of romance in it. Still, if you would like to hear a full confession, I will tell you all about myself.

"My family are well-to-do and almost wealthy. My father, a self-made man, is hard and inflexible; he deals the same measure to himself as to his wife and children. I have never seen the faintest smile on his lips. With a hand of iron, a brow of bronze, and an energetic nature at once sullen and morose, he crushed us all—wife and children, clerks and servants, beneath a savage tyranny. I think (I speak for myself alone) that I could have borne the life if the pressure brought to bear on us had been even; but he was crotchety and changeable, and this fitfulness made it unbearable. We never knew whether we had done right or wrong, and the horrible suspense in which we lived at home becomes intolerable in domestic life. It is pleasanter to be out in the streets than in the house. Even as it was, if I had been alone at home, I could have borne all this without a murmur; but there was my mother, whom I loved passionately; the sight of her misery and the continual bitterness of her life broke my heart; and if, as sometimes happened, I surprised her in tears, I was beside myself with rage. I was sent to school; and those years, usually a time of hardship and drudgery, were a sort of golden age for me. I dreaded the holidays. My mother herself was glad to come to see me at the school.

"When I had finished my humanities, I went home and entered my father's office, but I could only stay there a few months; youth was strong in me, my mind might have given way.

"One dreary autumn evening my mother and I took a walk by ourselves along the Boulevard Bourdon, then one of the most depressing spots in Paris, and there I opened my

heart to her. I said that I saw no possible life for me save in the church. So long as my father lived I was bound to be thwarted in my tastes, my ideas, even in my affections. If I adopted the priest's cassock, he would be compelled to respect me, and in this way I might become a tower of strength to the family should occasion call for it. My mother cried bitterly. At that very time my older brother had enlisted as a common soldier, driven out of the house by the causes which had decided my vocation. (He became a general afterwards, and fell in the battle of Leipsic.) I pointed out to my mother as a way of salvation for her that she should marry my sister (as soon as she should be old enough to settle in life) to a man with plenty of character, and look to this new family for support.

"So in 1807, under the pretext of escaping the conscription without expense to my father, and at the same time declaring my vocation, I entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice at the age of nineteen. Within those famous old walls I found happiness and peace, troubled only by thoughts of what my mother and sister must be enduring. Things had doubtless grown worse and worse at home, for when they came to see me they upheld me in my determination. Initiated, it may be, by my own pain into the secret of charity, as the great apostle has defined it in his sublime epistle, I longed to bind the wounds of the poor and suffering in some out-of-the-way spot; and thereafter to prove, if God deigned to bless my efforts, that the Catholic religion, as put in practice by man, is the one true, good, and noble civilizing agent on earth.

"During those last days of my diaconate, grace doubtless enlightened me. Fully and freely I forgave my father, for I saw that through him I had found my real vocation. But my mother—in spite of a long and tender letter, in which I explained this, and showed how the trace of the finger of God was visible throughout—my mother shed many tears when she saw my hair fall under the scissors of the church; for she

knew how many joys I was renouncing, and did not know the hidden glories to which I aspired. Women are so tender-hearted. When at last I was God's, I felt an infinite peace. All the cravings, the vanities, and cares that vex so many souls fell away from me. I thought that heaven would have a care for me as for a vessel of its own. I went forth into a world from which all fear was driven out, where the future was sure, where everything is the work of God—even the silence. This quietness of soul is one of the gifts of grace. My mother could not imagine what it was to take a church for a bride; nevertheless, when she saw that I looked serene and happy, she was happy. After my ordination I came to pay a visit to some of my father's relatives in Limousin, and one of these by accident spoke of the state of things in the Montégnac district. With a sudden illumination like lightning the thought flashed through my inmost soul—'Behold thy vine!' And I came here. So, as you see, sir, my story is quite simple and uninteresting."

As he spoke, Limoges appeared in the rays of the sunset, and at the sight the two women could not keep back their tears.

Meanwhile the young man whom love in its separate guises had come to find, the object of so much outspoken curiosity, hypocritical sympathy, and very keen anxiety, was lying on his prison mattress in the condemned cell. A spy at the door was on the watch for any words that might escape him waking or sleeping, or in one of his wild fits of fury; so bent was justice upon coming at the truth, and on discovering Jean-François' accomplice as well as the stolen money, by every means that the wit of man could devise.

The des Vanneaulx had the police in their interest; the police spies watched through the absolute silence. Whenever the man told off for this duty looked through the hole made for the purpose, he always saw the prisoner in the same atti-

tude, bound in his strait waistcoat, his head tied up by a leather strap to prevent him from tearing the stuff and the thongs with his teeth. Jean-François lay staring at the ceiling with a fixed desperate gaze, his eyes glowed, and seemed as if they were reddened by the full-pulsed tide of life sent surging through him by terrible thoughts. It was as if an antique statue of Prometheus had become a living man, with the thought of some lost joy gnawing his heart; so when the second *avocat général* came to see him, the visitor could not help showing his surprise at a character so dogged. At sight of any human being admitted into his cell, Jean-François flew into a rage which exceeded everything in the doctor's experience of such affections. As soon as he heard the key turn in the lock or the bolts drawn in the heavily-ironed door, a light froth came to his lips.

In person, Jean-François Tascheron, twenty-five years of age, was short but well made. His hair was stiff and crisp, and grew rather low on his forehead, signs of great energy. The clear, brilliant, yellow eyes, set rather too close together, gave him something the look of a bird of prey. His face was of the round dark-skinned type common in Central France. One of his characteristics confirmed Lavater's assertion that the front teeth overlap in those predestined to be murderers; but the general expression of his face spoke of honesty, of simple warm-heartedness of disposition—it would have been nothing extraordinary if a woman had loved such a man passionately. The lines of the fresh mouth, with its dazzling white teeth, were gracious; there was that peculiar shade in the scarlet of the lips which indicates ferocity held in check, and frequently a temperament which thirsts for pleasure and demands free scope for indulgence. There was nothing of the workman's coarseness about him. To the women who watched his trial it seemed evident that it was a woman who had brought flexibility and softness into the fibre inured to toil, the look of distinction into the face of a son of the

fields, and grace into his bearing. Women recognize the traces of love in a man, and men are quick to see in a woman whether (to use a colloquial phrase), "love has passed that way."

That evening Jean-François heard the sound as the bolts were withdrawn and the key was thrust into the lock; he turned his head quickly with the terrible smothered growl with which his fits of fury began; but he trembled violently when through the soft dusk he made out the forms of his mother and sister, and behind the two dear faces another—the curé of Montégnac.

"So this is what those barbarous wretches held in store for me!" he said, and closed his eyes.

Denise, with her prison experience, was suspicious of every least thing in the room; the spy had hidden himself, meaning, no doubt, to return; she fled to her brother, laid her tear-stained face against his, and said in his ear, "Can they hear what we say?"

"I should rather think they can, or they would not have sent you here," he answered aloud. "I have asked as a favor this long while that I might not see any of my family."

"What a way they have treated him!" cried the mother, turning to the curé. "My poor boy! my poor boy!" She sank down on the foot of the mattress, and hid her face in the priest's cassock. The curé stood upright beside her. "I cannot bear to see him bound and tied up like that and put into that sack——"

"If Jean will promise me to be good and make no attempt on his life, and to behave well while we are with him, I will ask for leave to unbind him; but I shall suffer for the slightest infraction of his promise."

"I have such a craving to stretch myself out and move freely, dear M. Bonnet," said the condemned man, his eyes filling with tears, "that I give you my word I will do as you wish."

The curé went out, the gaoler came, and the strait waistcoat was taken off.

"You are not going to kill me this evening, are you?" asked the turnkey.

Jean made no answer.

"Poor brother!" said Denise, bringing out a basket, which had been strictly searched, "there are one or two things here that you are fond of; here, of course, they grudge you every morsel you eat."

She brought out fruit gathered as soon as she knew that she might see her brother in prison, and a cake which her mother had put aside at once. This thoughtfulness of theirs, which recalled old memories, his sister's voice and movements, the presence of his mother and the curé—all combined to bring about a reaction in Jean. He burst into tears, and for a moment was completely overcome.

"Ah! Denise," he said, "I have not made a meal these six months past; I have eaten because hunger drove me to eat, that is all."

Mother and daughter went out and returned, and came and went. The housewifely instinct of seeing to a man's comfort put heart into them, and at last they set supper before their poor darling. The people of the prison helped them in this, having received orders to do all in their power compatible with the safe custody of the condemned man. The des Vanneaulx, with unkindly kindness, had done their part towards securing the comfort of the man in whose power their heritage lay. So Jean by these means was to know a last gleam of family happiness—happiness overshadowed by the sombre gloom of the prison and death.

"Was my appeal rejected?" he asked M. Bonnet.

"Yes, my boy. There is nothing left to you now but to make an end worthy of a Christian. This life of ours is as nothing compared with the life which awaits us; you must think of your happiness in eternity. Your account with men

is settled by the forfeit of your life, but God requires more, a life is too small a thing for Him."

"Forfeit my life?—— Ah, you do not know all that I must leave behind."

Denise looked at her brother, as if to remind him that prudence was called for even in matters of religion.

"Let us say nothing of that," he went on, eating fruit with an eagerness that denoted a fierce and restless fire within. "When must I——?"

"*No! no!* nothing of that before me!" cried the mother.

"I should be easier if I knew," he said in a low voice, turning to the curé.

"The same as ever!" exclaimed M. Bonnet, and he bent to say in Jean's ear—"If you make your peace with God to-night, and your repentance permits me to give you absolution, it shall be to-morrow." Aloud he added, "We have already gained something by calming you."

At these last words, Jean grew white to the lips, his eyes contracted with a heavy scowl, his features quivered with the coming storm of rage.

"What, am I calm?" he asked himself. Luckily his eyes met the tearful eyes of his sister Denise, and he regained the mastery over himself.

"Ah, well," he said, looking at the curé, "I could not listen to any one but you. They knew well how to tame me," and he suddenly dropped his head on his mother's shoulder.

"Listen, dear," his mother said, weeping, "our dear M. Bonnet is risking his own life by undertaking to be with you on the way to"—she hesitated, and then finished—"to eternal life."

And she lowered Jean's head and held it for a few moments on her heart.

"Will he go with me?" asked Jean, looking at the curé, who took it upon himself to bow his head. "Very well, I will listen to him, I will do everything that he requires of me."

"Promise me that you will," said Denise, "for your soul must be saved; that is what we are all thinking of. And then—would you have it said in Limoges and all the country round that a Tascheron could not die like a man? After all, just think that all that you lose here you may find again in heaven, where forgiven souls will meet again."

This preternatural effort parched the heroic girl's throat. Like her mother, she was silent, but she had won the victory. The criminal, hitherto frantic that justice had snatched away his cup of bliss, was thrilled with the sublime doctrine of the Catholic Church, expressed so artlessly by his sister. Every woman, even a peasant-girl like Denise Tascheron, possesses at need this tender tact; does not every woman love to think that love is eternal? Denise had touched two responsive chords. Awakened pride roused other qualities numbed by such utter misery and stunned by despair. Jean took his sister's hand in his and kissed it, and held her to his heart in a manner profoundly significant; tenderly, but in a mighty grasp.

"There," he said, "everything must be given up! That was my last heart-throb, my last thought—intrusted to you, Denise." And he gave her such a look as a man gives at some solemn moment, when he strives to impress his whole soul on another soul.

A whole last testament lay in the words and the thoughts; the mother and sister, the curé and Jean, understood so well that these were mute bequests to be faithfully executed and loyally demanded that they turned away their faces to hide their tears and the thoughts that might be read in their eyes. Those few words, spoken in the death-agony of passion, were the farewell to fatherhood and all that was sweetest on earth —the earnest of a Catholic renunciation of the things of earth. The curé, awed by the majesty of human nature, by all its greatness even in sin, measured the force of this mysterious passion by the enormity of the crime, and raised his eyes as

if to entreat God's mercy. In that action the touching consolation—the infinite tenderness of the Catholic faith—was revealed—a religion that shows itself so human, so loving, by the hand stretched down to teach mankind the laws of a higher world, so awful, so divine, by the hand held out to guide him to heaven. It was Denise who had just discovered to the curé, in this mysterious manner, the spot where the rock would yield the streams of repentance. Suddenly Jean uttered a blood-curdling cry, like some hyena caught by the hunters. Memories had awakened.

"No! no! no!" he cried, falling upon his knees. "I want to live! Mother, take my place. Change clothes with me. I could escape! Have pity! Have pity. Go to the King and tell him——"

He stopped short, a horrible sound like the growl of a wild beast broke from him; he clutched fiercely at the curé's cassock.

"Go," M. Bonnet said in a low voice, turning to the two women, who were quite overcome by this scene. Jean heard the word, and lifted his head. He looked up at his mother and sister, and kissed their feet.

"Let us say good-bye," he said. "Do not come back any more. Leave me alone with M. Bonnet; and do not be anxious about me now," he added, as he clasped his mother and sister in a tight embrace, in which he seemed as though he would fain put all the life that was in him.

"How can any one go through all this and live?" asked Denise as they reached the wicket.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when they separated. The Abbé de Rastignac was waiting at the gate of the prison, and asked the two women for news.

"He will make his peace with God," said Denise. "If he has not repented already, repentance is near at hand."

A few minutes later the bishop learned that the Church would triumph in this matter, and that the condemned man

would go to his execution with the most edifying religious sentiments. The public prosecutor was with his lordship, who expressed a wish to see the curé. It was midnight before M. Bonnet came. The Abbé Gabriel, who had been going to and fro between the palace and the prison, considered that the bishop's carriage ought to be sent for him, for the poor man was so exhausted that he could scarcely stand. The thought of to-morrow's horrible journey, the anguish of soul which he had witnessed, the full and entire repentance of this member of his flock, who broke down completely at last when the great forecast of eternity was put before him—all these things had combined to wear out M. Bonnet's strength, for with his nervous temperament and electric swiftness of apprehension, he was quick to feel the sorrows of others as if they were his own.

Souls like this beautiful soul are so open to receive the impressions, the sorrows, passions, and sufferings of those towards whom they are drawn, that they feel the pain as if it were in very truth their own, and this in a manner which is torture; for their clearer eyes can measure the whole extent of the misfortune in a way impossible to those blinded by the egoism of love or paroxysms of grief. In this respect such a confessor as M. Bonnet is an artist who feels, instead of an artist who judges.

In the drawing-room at the palace, where the two vicars-general, the public prosecutor, and M. de Granville, and the Abbé de Rastignac were waiting, it dawned upon M. Bonnet that he was expected to bring news.

"Monsieur le Curé," the bishop began, "have you obtained any confessions with which you may in confidence enlighten justice without failing in your duty?"

"Before I gave absolution to that poor lost child, my lord, I was not content that his repentance should be as full and entire as the Church could require; I still further insisted on the restitution of the money."

"I came here to the palace about that restitution," said the public prosecutor. "Some light will be thrown on obscure points in the case by the way in which it is made. He certainly has accomplices——"

"With the interests of man's justice I have no concern," the curé said. "I do not know how or where the restitution will be made, but made it will be. When my lord bishop summoned me here to one of my own parishioners, he replaced me in the exact conditions which give a curé in his own parish the rights which a bishop exercises in his diocese —ecclesiastical obedience and discipline apart."

"Quite right," said the bishop. "But the point is to obtain a voluntary confession before justice from the condemned man."

"My mission was simply to bring a soul to God," returned M. Bonnet.

M. de Grancour shrugged his shoulders slightly, and the Abbé Dutheil nodded approval.

"Tascheron, no doubt, wants to screen some one whom a restitution would identify," said the public prosecutor.

"Monsieur," retorted the curé, "I know absolutely nothing which might either confirm or contradict your conjecture; and, moreover, the secrets of the confessional are inviolable."

"So the restitution will be made?" asked the man of law.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the man of God.

"That is enough for me," said the public prosecutor. He relied upon the cleverness of the police to find and follow up any clue, as if passion and personal interest were not keener-witted than any detective.

Two days later, on a market-day, Jean-François Tascheron went to his death in a manner which left all pious and politic souls nothing to desire. His humility and piety were exemplary; he kissed with fervor the crucifix which M. Bonnet held out to him with trembling hands. The unfortunate

man was closely scanned; all eyes were on the watch to see the direction his glances might take; would he look up at one of the houses, or gaze on some face in the crowd? His discretion was complete and inviolable. He met his death like a Christian, penitent and forgiven.

The poor curé of Montégnac was taken away unconscious from the foot of the scaffold, though he had not so much as set eyes on the fatal machine.

The next day at nightfall, three leagues away from Limoges, out on the high-road, and in a lonely spot, Denise Tascheron suddenly stopped. Exhausted though she was with physical weariness and sorrow, she begged her father to allow her to go back to Limoges with Louis-Marie Tascheron, one of her brothers.

"What more do you want to do in that place?" her father asked sharply, raising his eyebrows, and frowning.

"We have not only to pay the lawyer, father," she said in his ear; "there is something else. The money that he hid must be given back."

"That is only right," said the rigorously honest man, fumbling in a leather purse which he carried about him.

"No," Denise said swiftly, "he is your son no longer; and those who blessed, not those who cursed him, ought to pay the lawyer's fees."

"We will wait for you at Havre?" her father said.

Denise and her brother crept into the town again before it was day. Though the police learned later on that two of the Taschérons had come back, they never could discover their lodging. It was near four o'clock when Denise and her brother went to the higher end of the town, stealing along close to the walls. The poor girl dared not look up, lest the eyes which should meet hers had seen her brother's head fall. First of all, she had sought out M. Bonnet, and he, unwell though he was, had consented to act as Denise's father and

guardian for the time being. With him they went to the barrister, who lived in the Rue de la Comédie.

"Good-day, poor children," the lawyer began, with a bow to M. Bonnet. "How can I be of use to you? Perhaps you want me to make application for your brother's body."

"No, sir," said Denise, her tears flowing at the thought, which had not occurred to her; "I have come to pay our debt to you, in so far as money can repay an eternal debt."

"Sit down a moment," said the lawyer, seeing that Denise and the curé were both standing. Denise turned away to draw from her stays two notes of five hundred francs, pinned to her shift. Then she sat down and handed over the bills to her brother's counsel. The curé looked at the lawyer with a light in his eyes, which soon filled with tears.

"Keep it," the barrister said; "keep the money yourself, my poor girl. Rich people do not pay for a lost cause in this generous way.

"I cannot do as you ask, sir, it is impossible," said Denise.

"Then the money does not come from you?" the barrister asked quickly.

"Pardon me," she replied, with a questioning glance at M. Bonnet—would God be angry with her for that lie?

The curé kept his eyes lowered.

"Very well," said the barrister, and, keeping one of the notes in his hand, he gave the other to the curé, "then I will divide it with the poor. And now, Denise, this is certainly mine"—he held out the note as he spoke—"will you give me your velvet ribbon and gold cross in exchange for it? I will hang the cross above my chimney-piece in memory of the purest and kindest girl's heart which I shall every meet with, I doubt not, in my career."

"There is no need to buy it," cried Denise, "I will give it you," and she took off her gilt cross and handed it to the lawyer.

"Very well, sir," said the curé, "I accept the five hundred

francs to pay the expenses of exhuming and removing the poor boy's body to the churchyard at Montégnac. Doubtless God has forgiven him; Jean will rise again with all my flock at the Last Day, when the righteous as well as the penitent sinner will be summoned to sit at the Father's right hand."

"So be it," said the barrister. He took Denise's hand and drew her towards him to put a kiss on her forehead, a movement made with another end in view.

"My child," he said, "nobody at Montégnac has such a thing as a five-hundred franc-note; they are rather scarce in Limoges; people don't take them here without asking something for changing them. So this money has been given to you by somebody; you are not going to tell me who it was, and I do not ask you, but listen to this: if you have anything left to do here which has any reference to your poor brother, mind how you set about it. M. Bonnet and you and your brother will all three of you be watched by spies. People know that your family have gone away. If anybody recognizes you here, you will be surrounded before you suspect it."

"Alas!" she said, "I have nothing left to do here."

"She is cautious," said the lawyer to himself, as he went to the door with her. "She has been warned, so let her extricate herself."

It was late September, but the days were as hot as in the summer. The bishop was giving a dinner-party. The local authorities, the public prosecutor, and the first *avocat général* were among the guests. Discussions were started, which grew lively in the course of the evening, and it was very late before they broke up. Whist and backgammon, that game beloved of bishops, were the order of the day. It happened that about eleven o'clock the public prosecutor stepped out upon the upper terrace, and from the corner where he stood saw a light on the island, which the Abbé Gabriel and the bishop had already fixed upon as the central spot and clue to the inexplicable tangle about Tascheron's crime—on Véronique's

Isle of France in fact. There was no apparent reason why anybody should kindle a fire in the middle of the Vienne at that time of night—then, all at once, the idea which had struck the bishop and his secretary flashed upon the public prosecutor's brain, with a light as sudden as that of the fire which shot up out of the distant darkness.

"What a set of great fools we have all been!" cried he, "but we have the accomplices now."

He went up to the drawing-room again, found out M. de Granville, and said a word or two in his ear; then both of them vanished. But the Abbé de Rastignac, courteously attentive, watched them go out, saw that they went towards the terrace, and noticed too that fire on the shore of the island.

"It is all over with her," thought he.

The messengers of justice arrived on the spot—too late. Denise and Louis-Marie (whom his brother Jean had taught to dive) were there, it is true, on the bank of the Vienne at a place pointed out by Jean; but Louis-Marie had already dived four times, and each time had brought up with him twenty thousand francs in gold. The first installment was secured in a bandana with the four corners tied up. As soon as the water had been wrung from the handkerchief, it was thrown on a great fire of dry sticks, kindled beforehand. A shawl contained the second, and the third was secured in a lawn handkerchief. Just as Denise was about to fling the fourth wrapper into the fire the police came up, accompanied by a commissary, and pounced upon a very important clue, as they thought, which Denise suffered them to seize without the slightest emotion. It was a man's pocket-handkerchief, which still retained some stains of blood in spite of its long immersion. Questioned forthwith as to her proceedings, Denise said that she had brought the stolen money out of the river, as her brother bade her. To the commissary, inquiring why she had burned the wrappings, she answered that she was following out her brother's instructions. Asked what the wrappings

were, she replied boldly and with perfect truth, "A bandana handkerchief, a lawn handkerchief, and a shawl."

The handkerchief which had just been seized belonged to her brother.

This fishing expedition and the circumstances accompanying it made plenty of talk in Limoges. The shawl in particular confirmed the belief that there was a love affair at the bottom of Tascheron's crime.

"He is dead, but he shields her still," commented one lady, when she heard these final revelations, so cleverly rendered useless.

"Perhaps there is some married man in Limoges who will find that he is a bandana short, but he will perforce hold his tongue," said the public prosecutor, smilingly.

"Little mistakes in one's wardrobe have come to be so compromising, that I shall set about verifying mine this very evening," said old Mme. Perret, smiling too.

"Whose are the dainty little feet that left the footmarks, so carefully erased?" asked M. de Granville.

"Pshaw! perhaps they belong to some ugly woman," returned the *avocat général.*

"She has paid dear for her slip," remarked the Abbé de Grancour.

"Do you know what all this business goes to prove?" put in the *avocat général.* "It just shows how much women have lost through the Revolution, which obliterated social distinctions. Such a passion is only to be met with nowadays in a man who knows that there is an enormous distance between him and the woman he loves."

"You credit love with many vanities," returned the Abbé Dutheil.

"What does Mme. Graslin think?" asked the prefect.

"What would you have her think? She was confined, as she told me she would be, on the day of the execution, and has seen nobody since; she is dangerously ill," said M. de Granville.

Meanwhile, in another room in Limoges, an almost comic scene was taking place. The des Vanneaulx's friends were congratulating them upon the restitution of their inheritance.

"Well, well," said Mme. des Vanneaulx, "they ought to have let him off, poor man. It was love, and not mercenary motives, that brought him to it; he was neither vicious nor wicked."

"He behaved like a thorough gentleman," said the Sieur des Vanneaulx. "*If I knew where his family was, I would do something for them;* they are good people, those Tascherons."

When Mme. Graslin was well enough to rise, towards the end of the year 1829, after the long illness which followed her confinement, and obliged her to keep her bed in absolute solitude and quiet, she heard her husband speak of a rather considerable piece of business which he wanted to conclude. The Navarreins family thought of selling the forest of Montégnac and the waste lands which they owned in the neighborhood. Graslin had not yet put into execution a clause in his wife's marriage settlement, which required that her dowry should be invested in land; he had preferred to put her money out at interest through the bank, and already had doubled her capital. On this, Véronique seemed to recollect the name of Montégnac, and begged her husband to carry out the contract by purchasing the estate for her.

M. Graslin wished very much to see M. Bonnet, to ask for information concerning the forest and lands which the Duc de Navarreins thought of selling. The Duc de Navarreins, be it said, foresaw the hideous struggle which the Prince de Polignac had made inevitable between the Liberals and the Bourbon dynasty; and augured the worst, for which reasons he was one of the boldest opponents of the Coup d'État. The Duke had sent his man of business to Limoges with instructions to sell, if a bidder could be found for so large a sum of money, for his grace recollected the Revolution of 1789 too well not

to profit by the lessons then taught to the aristocracy. It was this man of business who, for more than a month, had been at close quarters with Graslin, the shrewdest old fox in Limousin, and the only man whom common report singled out as being able to pay down the price of so large an estate on the spot.

At a word sent by the Abbé Dutheil, M. Bonnet hastened to Limoges and the Hôtel Graslin. Véronique would have prayed the curé to dine with her; but the banker only allowed M. Bonnet to go up to his wife's room after he had kept him a full hour in his private office, and obtained information which satisfied him so well, that he concluded his purchase out of hand, and the forest and domain of Montégnac became his (Graslin's) for five hundred thousand francs. He acquiesced in his wife's wish, stipulating that this purchase and any outlay relating thereto should be held to accomplish the clause in her marriage contract as to her fortune. Graslin did this the more willingly because the piece of honesty now cost him nothing.

At the time of Graslin's purchase the estate consisted of the forest of Montégnac, some thirty thousand acres in extent, but too inaccessible to bring in any money, the ruined castle, the gardens, and some five thousand acres in the uncultivated plains under Montégnac. Graslin made several more purchases at once, so as to have the whole of the first peak of the Corrèzien range in his hands, for there the vast forest of Montégnac came to an end. Since the taxes had been levied upon it, the Duc de Navarreins had not drawn fifteen thousand francs a year from the manor, formerly one of the richest tenures in the kingdom. The lands had escaped sale when put up under the Convention, partly because of their barrenness, partly because it was a recognized fact that nothing could be made of them.

When the curé came face to face with the woman of whom he had heard, a woman whose cleverness and piety were well

known, he started in spite of himself. At this time Véronique had entered upon the third period of her life, a period in which she was to grow greater by the exercise of the loftiest virtues, and become a totally different woman. To the Raphael's Madonna, hidden beneath the veil of smallpox scars, a beautiful, noble, and impassioned woman had succeeded, a woman afterwards laid low by inward sorrows, from which a saint emerged. Her complexion had taken the sallow tint seen in the austere faces of abbesses of ascetic life. A yellowish hue had overspread the temples, grown less imperious now. The lips were paler, the red of the opening pomegranate flower had changed into the paler crimson of the Bengal rose. Between the nose and the corners of the eyes sorrow had worn two pearly channels, down which many tears had coursed in secret; much weeping had worn away the traces of smallpox. It was impossible not to fix your eyes on the spot where a network of tiny blue veins stood out swollen and distended with the full pulses that throbbed there, as if they fed the source of many tears. The faint brownish tinge about the eyes alone remained, but there were dark circles under them now, and wrinkles in the eyelids which told of terrible suffering. The lines in the hollow cheeks bore record of solemn thoughts. The chin, too, had shrunk, it had lost its youthful fulness of outline, and this scarcely to the advantage of a face which wore an expression of pitiless austerity, confined, however, solely to Véronique herself. At twenty-nine years of age her hair, one of her greatest beauties, had faded and grown scanty; she had been obliged to pull out a large quantity of white hair, bleached during her confinement. Her thinness was shocking to see. In spite of the doctor's orders, she had persisted in nursing the child herself; and the doctor was not disposed to let people forget this when all his evil prognostications were so thoroughly fulfilled.

"See what a difference a single confinement has made in a woman!" said he. "And she worships that child of hers;

but I have always noticed that the more a child costs the mother, the dearer it is."

All that remained of youth in Véronique's face lay in her eyes, wan though they were. An untamed fire flashed from the dark blue iris; all the life that had deserted the cold impassive mask of a face, expressionless now save for the charitable look which it wore when her poorer neighbors were spoken of, seemed to have taken refuge there. So the curé's first dismay and surprise abated somewhat as he went on to explain to her how much good a resident landowner might effect in Montégnac, and for a moment Véronique's face grew beautiful, lighted up by this unexpected hope which began to shine in upon her.

"I will go there," she said. "It shall be my property. I will ask M. Graslin to put some funds at my disposal, and I will enter into your charitable work with all my might. Montégnac shall be cultivated; we will find water somewhere to irrigate the waste land in the plain. You are striking the rock, like Moses, and tears will flow from it!"

The curé of Montégnac spoke of Mme. Graslin as a saint when his friends in Limoges asked him about her.

The very day after the purchase was completed, Graslin sent an architect to Montégnac. He was determined to restore the castle, the gardens, terraces, and park, to reclaim the forest by a plantation, putting an ostentatious activity into all that he did.

Two years later a great misfortune befell Mme. Graslin. Her husband, in spite of his prudence, was involved in the commercial and financial disasters of 1830. The thought of bankruptcy, or of losing three millions, the gains of a lifetime of toil, were both intolerable to him. The worry and anxiety aggravated the inflammatory disease, always lurking in his system, the result of impure blood. He was compelled to take to his bed. In Véronique a friendly feeling towards Graslin had developed during her pregnancy, and dealt a fatal

blow to the hopes of her admirer, M. de Granville. By careful nursing she tried to save her husband's life, but only succeeded in prolonging a suffering existence for a few months. This respite, however, was very useful to Grossetête, who, foreseeing the end, consulted with his old comrade, and made all the necessary arrangements for a prompt realization.

In April, 1831, Monsieur Graslin died, and his widow's despairing grief only sobered down into Christian resignation. From the first Véronique had wished to give up her whole fortune to her husband's creditors; but M. Graslin's estate proved to be more than sufficient. It was Grossetête who wound up his affairs, and two months after the settlement Mme. Graslin found herself the mistress of the domains of Montégnac and of six hundred and sixty thousand francs, all her own; and no blot rested on her son's name. No one had lost anything through Graslin—not even his wife; and Francis Graslin had about a hundred thousand francs.

Then M. de Granville, who had reason to know Véronique's nature and loftiness of soul, came forward as a suitor; but, to the amazement of all Limoges, Mme. Graslin refused the newly-appointed public prosecutor, on the ground that second marriages were discountenanced by the Church. Grossetête, a man of unerring forecast and sound sense, advised Véronique to invest the rest of M. Graslin's fortune and her own in the Funds, and effected this himself for her at once, in the month of July, when the three per cents. stood at fifty. So Francis had an income of six thousand livres, and his mother about forty thousand. Véronique's was still the greatest fortune in the department.

All was settled at last, and Mme. Graslin gave out that she meant to leave Limoges to live nearer to M. Bonnet. Again she sent for the curé, to consult him about his work at Montégnac, in which she was determined to share; but he generously tried to dissuade her, and to make it clear to her that her place was in society.

"I have sprung from the people, and I mean to return to them," said she.

The curé's great love for his own village resisted the more feebly when he learned that Mme. Graslin had arranged to make over her house in Limoges to M. Grossetête. Certain sums were due to the banker, and he took the house at its full value in settlement.

Mme. Graslin finally left Limoges towards the end of August, 1831. A troop of friends gathered about her, and went with her as far as the outskirts of the town; some of them went the whole first stage of the journey. Véronique traveled in a calèche with her mother; the Abbé Dutheil, recently appointed to a bishopric, sat opposite them with old M. Grossetête. As they went through the Place d'Aine, Véronique's emotion was almost uncontrollable; her face contracted; every muscle quivered with the pain; she snatched up her child, and held him tightly to her in a convulsive grasp, while La Sauviat tried to cover her emotion by following her example—it seemed that La Sauviat was not unprepared for something of this kind.

Chance so ordered it that Mme. Graslin caught a glimpse of the house where her father had lived; she clutched Mme. Sauviat's hand, great tears filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. When Limoges was fairly left behind, she turned and took a last farewell glance; and all her friends noticed a certain look of happiness in her face. When the public prosecutor, the young man of five-and-twenty whom she had declined to marry, came up and kissed her hand with lively expressions of regret, the newly-made bishop noticed something strange in Véronique's eyes: the dark pupils dilated till the blue became a thin ring about them. It was unmistakable that some violent revulsion took place within her.

"Now I shall never see him again," she said in her mother's ear, but there was not the slightest trace of feeling

in the impassive old face as Mme. Sauviat received that confidence.

Grossetête, the shrewd old banker, sitting opposite, watching the women with keen eyes, had not discovered that Véronique hated this man, whom for that matter she received as a visitor. In things of this kind a churchman is far clearer-sighted than other men, and the bishop surprised Véronique by a glance that revealed an ecclesiastic's perspicacity.

"You have no regret in leaving Limoges?" the bishop said to Mme. Graslin.

"You are leaving the town," she replied. "And M. Grossetête scarcely ever comes among us now," she added, with a smile for her old friend as he said good-bye.

The bishop went the whole of the way to Montégnac with Véronique.

"I ought to have made this journey in mourning," she said in her mother's ear as they walked up the hill near Saint-Léonard.

The old woman turned her crabbed, wrinkled face, and laid her finger on her lips; then she pointed to the bishop, who was giving the child a terrible scrutiny. Her mother's gesture first, and yet more the significant expression in the bishop's eyes, made Mme. Graslin shudder. The light died out of her face as she looked out across the wide gray stretch of plain before Montégnac, and melancholy overcame her. All at once she saw the curé coming to meet her, and made him take a seat in the carriage.

"This is your domain," said M. Bonnet, indicating the level waste.

IV

MADAME GRASLIN AT MONTÉGNAC.

In a few moments the township of Montégnac came in sight; the hillside and the conspicuous new buildings upon it shone golden in the light of the sunset; it was a lovely landscape like an oasis in the desert, with a picturesque charm of its own, due to the contrast with its setting. Mme. Graslin's eyes began to fill with tears. The curé pointed out a broad white track like a scar on the hillside.

"That is what my parishioners have done to show their gratitude to their lady of the manor," he said. "We can drive the whole way to the château. The road is finished now, and has not cost you a sou; we shall put in a row of trees beside it in two months' time. My lord bishop can imagine how much toil, thought, and devotion went to the making of such a change."

"And they have done this themselves!" said the bishop.

"They would take nothing in return, my lord. The poorest lent a hand, for they all knew that one who would be like a mother to them was coming to live among us."

There was a crowd at the foot of the hill, all the village was there. Guns were fired off, and mortars exploded, and then the two prettiest girls of Montégnac, in white dresses, came to offer flowers and fruit to Mme. Graslin.

"That I should be welcomed here like this!" she cried, clutching M. Bonnet's hand as if she felt that she was falling over a precipice.

The crowd went up as far as the great iron gateway, whence Mme. Graslin could see her château. At first sight the splendor of her dwelling was a shock to her. Stone for building is scarce in this district, for the native granite is

hard and exceedingly difficult to work; so Graslin's architect had used brick for the main body of the great building, there being plenty of brick earth in the forest of Montégnac, and wood for the felling. All the woodwork and stone, in fact, came also from the forest and the quarries in it. But for these economies, Graslin must have been put to a ruinous expense; but as it was, the principal outlay was for wages, carriage, and salaries, and the money circulating in the township had put new life into it.

At a first glance the château stood up a huge red mass, scored with dark lines of mortar, and outlined with gray, for the facings and quoins and the string courses along each story were of granite, each block being cut in facets diamond fashion. The surface of the brick walls round the courtyard (a sloping oval like the courtyard of Versailles) was broken by slabs of granite surrounded by bosses, and set at equal distances. Shrubs had been planted under the walls, with a view to obtaining the contrasts of their various foliage. Two handsome iron gateways gave access on the one hand to the terrace which overlooked Montégnac, and on the other to a farm and outbuildings. The great gateway at the summit of the new road, which had just been finished, had a neat lodge on either side, built in the style of the sixteenth century.

The façade of the château fronted the courtyard and faced the west. It consisted of three towers, the central tower being connected with the one on either side of it by two wings. The back of the house was precisely similar, and looked over the gardens towards the east. There was but one window in each tower on the side of the courtyard and gardens, each wing having three. The centre tower was built something after the fashion of a campanile, the corner-stones were vermiculated, and here some delicate sculptured work had been sparingly introduced. Art is timid in the provinces; and though in 1829 some progress had been made in architectural ornament (thanks to certain writers), the owners of

houses shrank at that time from an expense which lack of competition and scarcity of craftsmen rendered somewhat formidable.

The tower at either end (three windows in depth) was crowned by a high-pitched roof, with a granite balustrade by way of decoration; each angle of the pyramid was sharply cut by an elegant balcony lined with lead, and surrounded by cast-iron railings, and an elegantly sculptured window occupying each side of the roof. All the door and window cornices on each story were likewise ornamented with carved work copied from Genoese palace fronts. The three side windows of the southern tower looked out over Montégnac, the northern gave a view of the forest.

From the eastern windows you could see beyond the gardens that part of Montégnac where the Taschérons had lived, and far down below in the valley the road which led to the chief town in the arrondissement. From the west front, which faced towards the courtyard, you saw the wide map of the plain stretching away on the Montégnac side to the mountains of the Corrèze, and elsewhere to the circle of the horizon, where it blended with the sky.

The wings were low, the single story being built in the mansard roof, in the old French style, but the towers at either end rose a story higher. The central tower was crowned by a sort of flattened dome like the clock towers of the Tuileries or the Louvre; the single room in the turret was a sort of belvedere, and fitted with a turret-clock. Ridge tiles had been used for economy's sake; the massive balks of timber from the forest readily carried the enormous weight of the roof.

Graslin's "folly," as he called the château, had brought five hundred thousand francs into the commune. He had planned the road before he died, and the commune out of gratitude had finished it. Montégnac had, moreover, grown considerably. Behind the stables and outbuildings, on the

north side of the hill where it slopes gradually down into the plain, Graslin had begun to build the steadings of a farm on a large scale, which showed that he had meant to turn the waste land in the plain to account. The plantations considered indispensable by M. Bonnet were still proceeding under the direction of a head gardener with six men, who were lodged in the outbuildings.

The whole ground floor of the château, taken up by sitting-rooms, had been splendidly furnished, but the second story was rather bare, M. Graslin's death having suspended the upholsterer's operations.

"Ah! my lord," said Mme. Graslin, turning to the bishop, after they had been through the château, "I had thought to live here in a thatched cottage. Poor M. Graslin committed many follies——"

"And you——" the bishop added, after a pause, and Mme. Graslin's light shudder did not escape him—"*you* are about to do charitable deeds, are you not?"

She went to her mother, who held little Francis by the hand, laid her hand on the old woman's arm, and went with the two as far as the long terrace which rose above the church and the parsonage; all the houses in the village, rising stepwise up the hillside, could be seen at once. The curé took possession of M. Dutheil, and began to point out the various features of the landscape; but the eyes of both ecclesiastics soon turned to the terrace, where Véronique and her mother stood motionless as statues; the older woman took out a handkerchief and wiped her eyes, her daughter leaned upon the balustrade, and seemed to be pointing out the church below.

"What is the matter, madame?" the Curé Bonnet asked, turning to La Sauviat.

"Nothing," answered Mme. Graslin, coming towards the two priests and facing them. "I did not know that the churchyard would be right under my eyes——"

"You can have it removed; the law is on your side."

"*The law!*" the words broke from her like a cry of pain.

Again the bishop looked at Véronique. But she—tired of meeting that sombre glance, which seemed to lay bare the soul and discover her secret in its depths, a secret buried in a grave in that churchyard—cried out—

"Very well, then—*yes!*"

The bishop laid his hand over his eyes, so overwhelmed by this, that for some moments he stood lost in thought.

"Hold her up," cried the old mother; "she is turning pale."

"The air here is so keen, I have taken a chill," murmured Mme. Graslin, and she sank fainting as the two ecclesiastics caught her in their arms. They carried her into the house, and when she came to herself again she saw the bishop and the curé kneeling in prayer for her.

"May the angel which has visited you ever stay beside you!" the bishop said, as he gave her his blessing. "Adieu, my daughter."

Mme. Graslin burst into tears at the words.

"Is she really saved?" cried the old mother.

"In this world and in the next," the bishop turned to answer, as he left the room.

Mme. Graslin had been carried by her mother's orders to a room on the first floor of the southern tower; the windows looked out upon the churchyard and the south side of Montégnac. Here she chose to remain, and installed herself there as best she could with her maid Aline, and little Francis. Mme. Sauviat's room naturally was near her daughter's.

It was some days before Mme. Graslin recovered from the cruel agitation which prostrated her on the day of her arrival, and, moreover, her mother insisted that she must stay in bed in the morning. In the evening, however, Véronique came to sit on a bench on the terrace, and looked down on the church and parsonage and into the churchyard. In spite of mute opposition on Mme. Sauviat's part, Véronique contracted a

habit of always sitting in the same place and giving way to melancholy broodings; it was almost a mania.

"Madame is dying," Aline said to the old mother.

At last the two women spoke to the curé; and he, good man, who had shrunk from intruding himself upon Mme. Graslin, came assiduously to see her when he learned that she was suffering from some malady of the soul, carefully timing his visits so that he always found Véronique and the child, both in mourning, out on the terrace. The country was already beginning to look dreary and sombre in the early days of October.

When Véronique first came to the château, M. Bonnet had seen at once that she was suffering from some hidden wound, but he thought it better to wait until his future penitent should give him her confidence. One evening, however, he saw an expression in Mme. Graslin's eyes that warned him to hesitate no longer—the dull apathy of a mind brooding over the thought of death. He set himself to check the progress of this cruel disease of the mind.

At first there was a sort of struggle between them, a fence of empty words, each of them striving to disguise their thoughts. The evening was chilly, but for all that Véronique sat out on the granite bench with little Francis on her knee. She could not see the churchyard, for Mme. Sauviat, leaning against the parapet, deliberately shut it out from sight. Aline stood waiting to take the child indoors. It was the seventh time that the curé had found Véronique there on the terrace. He spoke—

"I used to think that you were merely sad, madame, but," and he lowered his voice and spoke in her ear, "this is despair. Despair, Madame Graslin, is neither Christian nor is it Catholic."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with an intent glance at the sky, and a bitter smile stole over her lips, "what would the church leave to a damned soul, if not despair?"

Her words revealed to the curé how far this soul had been laid waste.

"Ah! you are making for yourself a hell out of this hill-side, when it should rather be a calvary whence your soul might lift itself up towards heaven."

"I am too humble now," she said, "to put myself on such a pedestal," and her tone was a revelation of the depth of her self-scorn.

Then a sudden light flashed across the curé—one of the inspirations which come so often and so naturally to noble and pure souls who live with God. He took up the child and kissed him on the forehead. "Poor little one!" he said, in a fatherly voice, and gave the child to the nurse, who took him away. Mme. Sauviat looked at her daughter, and saw how powerfully those words had wrought on her, for Véronique's eyes, long dry, were wet with tears. Then she too went, with a sign to the priest.

"Will you take a walk on the terrace?" suggested M. Bonnet when they were alone. "You are in my charge; I am accountable to God for your sick soul," and they went towards the end of the terrace above "Tascherons'."

"Leave me to recover from my prostration," she said.

"Your prostration is the result of pernicious broodings."

"Yes," she said, with the naïveté of pain, too sorely troubled to fence any longer.

"I see," he answered; "you have sunk into the depths of indifference. If physical pain passes a certain point it extinguishes modesty, and so it is with mental anguish, it reaches a degree when the soul grows faint within us; I know."

Véronique was not prepared for this subtle observation and tender pity in M. Bonnet; but as has been seen already, the quick sympathies of a heart unjaded by emotion of its own had taught him to detect and feel the pain of others among his flock with the maternal instinct of a woman. This apostolic tenderness, this *mens divinior*, raises the priest above his

fellow-men and makes of him a being divine. Mme. Graslin had not as yet looked deep enough into the curé's nature to discover the beauty hidden away in that soul, the source of its grace and freshness and its inner life.

"Ah! monsieur——" she began, and a glance and a gesture, such a gesture and glance as the dying give, put her secret into his keeping.

"I understand!" he answered. "But what then? What is to be done?"

Silently they went along the terrace towards the plain. To the bearer of good-tidings, the son of Christ, the solemn moment seemed propitious.

"Suppose that you stood now before the Throne of God," he said, and his voice grew low and mysterious, "what would you say to Him?"

Mme. Graslin stopped short as if thunderstruck; a light shudder ran through her.

"I should say to Him as Christ said, 'My Father, Thou hast forsaken me!'" she answered simply. The tones of her voice brought tears to the curé's eyes.

"Oh Magdalen, those are the very words I was waiting to hear!" he exclaimed, unable to refuse his admiration. "You see, you appeal to God's justice! Listen, madame, religion is the rule of God before the time. The church reserves the right of judgment in all that concerns the soul. Man's justice is but the faint image of God's justice, a pale shadow of the eternal adapted to the temporal needs of society."

"What do you mean?"

"You are not judge in your own cause, you are amenable to God; you have no right to condemn nor to pardon yourself. God is the great reviser of judgments, my daughter."

"Ah!" she cried.

"He *sees* to the origin of all things, while we only see the things themselves."

Again Véronique stopped. These ideas were new to her.

"To a soul as lofty as yours," he went on courageously, "I do not speak as to my poor parishioners; I owe it to you to use a different language. You who have so cultivated your mind can rise to the knowledge of the spirit of the Catholic religion, which words and symbols must express and make visible to the eyes of babes and the poor. Follow what I am about to say carefully, for it refers to you; and if the point of view which I take for the moment seems wide, it is none the less your own case which I am considering, and now about to make clear to your understanding.

"Justice, devised for the protection of society, is based upon a theory of the equality of individuals. Society, which is nothing but an aggregation of facts, is based on *inequality*. So there is a fundamental discrepancy between justice and fact. Should the law exercise a restraining or encouraging influence on the progress of society? In other words, should the law oppose itself to the internal tendency of society, so as to maintain things as they are; or, on the other hand, should the law be more flexible, adapt itself, and keep pace with the tendency so as to guide it? No maker of laws since men began to live together has taken it upon himself to decide that problem. All legislators have been content to analyze facts, to indicate those which seemed to them to be blameworthy or criminal, and to prescribe punishments or rewards. Such is law as man has made it. It is powerless to prevent evil-doing; powerless no less to prevent offenders who have been punished from offending again.

"Philanthropy is a sublime error. Philanthropy vainly applies severe discipline to the body, while it cannot find the balm which heals the soul. Philanthropy conceives projects, sets forth theories, and leaves mankind to carry them out by means of silence, work, and discipline—dumb methods, with no virtue in them. Religion knows nought of these imperfections; for her, life extends beyond this world; for religion, we are all of us fallen creatures in a state of degradation, and it

is this very view of mankind which opens out to us an inexhaustible treasure of indulgence. All of us are on the way to our complete regeneration, some of us are farther advanced, and some less, but none of us are infallible; the church is prepared for sins, aye, and even for crimes. In a criminal, society sees an individual to be cut off from its midst, but the church sees in him a soul to be saved. And more, far more !—— Inspired by God, whose dealings with man she watches and ponders, the church admits our inequality as human beings, and takes the disproportionate burden into account, and we who are so unequal in heart, in body or mind, in courage or aptitude, are made equal by repentance. In this, madame, equality is no empty word; we can be, and are, all equal through our sentiments.

"One idea runs through all religions, from the uncouth fetichism of the savage to the graceful imaginings of the Greek and the profound and ingenious doctrines of India and Egypt, an idea that finds expression in all cults joyous or gloomy, a conviction of man's fall and of his sin, whence, everywhere, the idea of sacrifice and redemption.

"The death of the Redeemer, who died for the whole human race, is for us a symbol; this, too, we must do for ourselves; we must redeem our errors!—redeem our sins!—redeem our crimes! There is no sin beyond redemption—all Catholicism lies in that. It is the wherefore of the holy sacraments which assist in the work of grace and sustain the repentant sinner. And though one should weep, madame, and sigh like the Magdalen in the desert, this is but the beginning—an action is the end. The monasteries wept, but acted too; they prayed, but they civilized; they were the active practical spreaders of our divine religion. They built, and planted, and tilled Europe; they rescued the treasures of learning for us; to them we owe the preservation of our jurisprudence, our traditions of statecraft and art. The sites of those centres of light will be for ever remembered in Europe

with gratitude. Most modern towns sprang up about a monastery.

"If you believe that God is to judge you, the church, using my voice, tells you that there is no sin beyond redemption through the good works of repentance. The evil we have wrought is weighed against the good that we have done by the great hands of God. Be yourself a monastery here; it is within your power to work miracles once more. For you, work must be prayer. Your work should be to diffuse happiness among those above whom you have been set by your fortune and your intellect, and in all ways, even by your natural position, for the height of your château above the village is a visible expression of your social position."

They were turning towards the plains as he spoke, so that the curé could point out the village on the lower slopes of the hill and the château towering above it. It was half-past four in the afternoon. A shaft of yellow sunlight fell across the terrace and the gardens; it lighted up the château and brought out the pattern of the gleaming gilt scroll-work on the corner balconies high up on the towers; it lit the plain which stretched into the distance divided by the road, a sober gray ribbon with no embroidery of trees as yet to outline a waving green border on either side. Véronique and M. Bonnet passed the end of the château and came into the courtyard, beyond which the stables and barn buildings lay in sight, and farther yet, the forest of Montégnac; the sunlight slid across the landscape like a lingering caress. Even when the last glow of the sunset had faded except from the highest hills, it was still light enough in the plain below to see all the chance effects of color in the splendid tapestry of an autumn forest spread between Montégnac and the first peak of the chain of the Corrèze. The oak trees stood out like masses of Florentine bronze among the verdigris greens of the walnuts and chestnuts; the leaves of a few trees, the first to change, shone like gold among the others; and all these different

shades of color were emphasized by the gray patches of bare earth. The trunks of leafless trees looked like pale columns; and every tint, red, tawny, and gray, picturesquely blended in the pale October sunshine, made a harmony of color with the fertile lowland, where the vast fallows were green as stagnant water. Not a tree stirred, not a bird—death in the plain, silence in the forest; a thought in the priest's mind, as yet unuttered, was to be the sole comment on that dumb beauty. A streak of smoke rose here and there from the thatched roofs of the village. The château seemed sombre as its mistress' mood, for there is a mysterious law of uniformity, in virtue of which the house takes its character from the dominant nature within it, a subtle presence which hovers throughout. The sense of the curé's words had reached Mme. Graslin's brain; they had gone to her heart with all the force of conviction; the angelic resonance of his voice had stirred her tenderness; she stopped suddenly short. The curé stretched his arm out towards the forest; Véronique looked at him.

"Do you not see a dim resemblance between this and the life of humanity? His own fate for each of us! And what unequal lots there are among that mass of trees. Those on the highest ground have poorer soil and less water; they are the first to die——"

"And some are *cut down in the grace of their youth by some woman* gathering wood!" she said bitterly.

"Do not give way to those feelings again," he answered firmly, but with indulgence in his manner. "The forest has not been cut down, and that has been its ruin. Do you see something yonder there among the dense forest?"

Véronique could scarcely distinguish between the usual and unusual in a forest, but she obediently looked in the required direction, and then timidly at the curé.

"Do you not observe," he said, seeing in that glance that Véronique did not understand, "that there are strips where all the trees of every kind are still green?"

"Oh, so there are!" she cried. "How is it?"

"In those strips of green lies a fortune for Montégnac and for you—a vast fortune, as I pointed out to M. Graslin. You can see three furrows; those are three valleys, the streams there are lost in the torrent-bed of the Gabou. The Gabou is the boundary line between us and the next commune. All through September and October it is dry, but when November comes it will be full. All that water runs to waste; but it would be easy to make one or two weirs across from side to side of the valley to keep back the water (as Riquet did at Saint-Ferréol, where there are huge reservoirs which supply the Languedoc canal); and it would be easy to increase the volume of the water by turning several little streams in the forest into the river. Wisely distributing it as required, by means of sluices and irrigation trenches, the whole plain can be brought into cultivation, and the overflow, besides, could be turned into our little river.

"You will have fine poplars along all the channels, and you will raise cattle in the finest possible meadows. What is grass but water and sun? You could grow corn in the plain, there is quite enough depth of earth; with so many trenches there will be moisture to enrich the soil; the poplar trees will flourish along the channels and attract the rain-clouds, and the fields will absorb the principles of the rain: these are the secrets of the luxuriant greenness of the valleys. Some day you will see life and joy and stir instead of this prevailing silence and barren dreariness. Will not this be a noble prayer? Will not these things occupy your idleness better than melancholy broodings?"

Véronique grasped the curé's hand, and made but a brief answer, but that answer was grand—

"It shall be done, monsieur."

"You have a conception of this great thing," he began again, "but you will not carry it out yourself. Neither you nor I have knowledge enough for the realization of a thought

which might occur to any one, but that raises immense practical difficulties; for simple and almost invisible as those difficulties are, they call for the most accurate skill of science. So to-morrow begin your search for the human instruments which, in a dozen years' time, will contrive that the six thousand acres thus brought into cultivation shall yield you an income of six or seven thousand louis d'or. The undertaking will make Montégnac one of the richest communes in the department some day. The forest brings in nothing as yet; but sooner or later buyers will come here for the splendid timber, treasures slowly accumulated by time, the only treasures which man cannot procure save by patient waiting, and cannot do without. Perhaps some day (who knows) the government will take steps to open up ways of transporting timber grown here to its dockyards; but the government will wait until Montégnac is ten times its present size before giving its fostering aid; for the government, like fortune, gives only to those who have. By that time this estate will be one of the finest in France; it will be the pride of your grandson, who may possibly find the château too small in proportion to his income."

"That is a future for me to live for," said Véronique.

"Such a work might redeem many errors," said the curé.

Seeing that he was understood, he endeavored to send a last shaft home by way of her intelligence; he had divined that in the woman before him the heart could only be reached through the brain; whereas, in other women, the way to the brain lies through the heart.

"Do you know what a great mistake you are making?" he asked, after a pause.

She looked at him with frightened eyes.

"Your repentance as yet is only the consciousness of a defeat. If there is anything fearful, it is the despair of Satan; and perhaps man's repentance was like this before Jesus Christ came on earth. But for us Catholics, repentance is the horror

which seizes on a soul hurrying on its downward course, and in that shock God reveals Himself. You are like a Pagan Orestes; become a Saint Paul!"

"Your words have just wrought a complete change in me," she cried. "Now, oh! I want to live!"

"The spirit has overcome," the humble priest said to himself, as he went away, glad at heart. He had found food for the secret despair which was gnawing Mme. Graslin, by giving to her repentance the form of a good and noble deed.

The very next day, therefore, Véronique wrote to M. Grossetête, and in answer to her letter three saddle-horses arrived from Limoges for her in less than a week. M. Bonnet made inquiries, and sent the postmaster's son to the château; the young fellow, Maurice Champion by name, was only too pleased to put himself at Mme. Graslin's disposal, with a chance of earning some fifty crowns. Véronique took a liking for the lad—round-faced, black-eyed, and black-haired, short, and well built—and he was at once installed as groom; he was to ride out with his mistress and to take charge of the horses.

The head forester at Montégnac was a native of Limoges, an old quartermaster in the Royal Guard. He had been transferred from another estate when the Duc de Navarreins began to think of selling the Montégnac lands, and wanted information to guide him in the matter; but in Montégnac forest Jerome Colorat only saw waste land, never likely to come under cultivation, timber valueless for lack of means of transport, gardens run wild, and a castle in ruins, calling for a vast outlay if it was to be set in order and made habitable. He saw wide rock-strewn spaces and conspicuous gray patches of granite even in the forest, and the honest but unintelligent servant took fright at these things. This was how the property had come into the market.

Mme. Graslin sent for this forester.

"Colorat," she said, "I shall most probably ride out to-

morrow morning and every following day. You should know the different bits of outlying land which M. Graslin added to the estate, and you must point them out to me; I want to see everything for myself.''

The servants at the château were delighted at this change in Véronique's life. Aline found out her mistress' old black riding habit, and mended it, without being told to do so, and next morning, with inexpressible pleasure, Mme. Sauviat saw her daughter dressed for a riding excursion. With Champion and the forester as her guides, Mme. Graslin set herself first of all to climb the heights. She wanted to understand the position of the slopes and the glens, the natural roadways cleft in the long ridge of the mountain. She would measure her task, study the course of the streams, and see the rough material of the curé's schemes. The forester and Champion were often obliged to consult their memories, for the mountain paths were scarcely visible in that wild country. Colorat went in front, and Champion followed a few paces from her side.

So long as they kept in the denser forest, climbing and descending the continual undulations of a French mountain district, its wonders filled Véronique's mind. The mighty trees which had stood for centuries amazed her, until she saw so many that they ceased to be a surprise. Then others succeeded, full grown and ready for felling; or in a forest clearing some single pine risen to giant height; or, stranger still, some common shrub, a dwarf growth elsewhere, here risen, under some unusual conditions, to the height of a tree nearly as old as the soil in which it grew. The wreaths of mist rolling over the bare rocks filled her with indescribable feelings. Higher yet, pale furrows cut by the melting snows looked like scars far up on the mountain sides; there were bleak ravines in which no plant grew, hillside slopes where the soil had been washed away, leaving bare the rock-clefts, where the hundred-year-old chestnuts grew straight and tall as

pines in the Alps; sometimes they went by vast shifting sands, or boggy places where the trees are few; by fallen masses of granite, overhanging crags, dark glens, wide stretches of burnt grass or moor, where the heather was still in bloom, arid and lonely spots where the caper grows and the juniper, then through meadows covered with fine short grass, where the rich alluvial soil had been brought down and deposited century after century by the mountain torrents; in short, this rapid ride gave her something like a bird's-eye view of the land, a glimpse of the dreariness and grandeur, the strength and sweetness of nature's wilder moods in the mountain country of midland France. And by dint of gazing at these pictures so various in form, but instinct with the same thought, the deep sadness expressed by the wild ruined land in its barrenness and neglect passed into her own thoughts, and found a response in her secret soul. As, through some gap in the woods, she looked down on the gray stretch of plain below, or when their way led up some parched ravine where a few stunted shrubs starved among the boulders and the sand, by sheer reiteration of the same sights she fell under the influence of this stern scenery; it called up new ideas in her mind, stirred to a sense of the significance underlying these outward and visible forms. There is no spot in a forest but has this inner sense, not a clearing, not a thicket, but has an analogy in the labyrinth of the human thought.

Who is there with a thinking brain or a wounded heart that can pass through a forest and find the forest dumb? Before you are aware its voice is in your ears, a soothing or an awful voice, but more often soothing than awful. And if you were to examine very closely into the causes of this sensation, this solemn, incomplex, subduing, and mysterious forest-influence that comes over you, perhaps you will find its source in the sublime and subtle effect of the presence of so many creatures all obedient to their destinies, immovable in submission. Sooner or later the overwhelming sense of the abid-

ingness of nature fills your heart and stirs deeper feelings, until at length you grow restless to find God in it. And so it was that the silence of the mountain heights about her, out in the pure clear air with the forest scents in it, Véronique recovered, as she told M. Bonnet in the evening, the certainty of Divine mercy. She had glimpses of the possibility of an order of things above and beyond that in which her musings had hitherto revolved. She felt something like happiness. For a long time past she had not known such peace. Could it have been that she was conscious of a certain likeness between this country and the waste and dried-up places in her own soul? Did she look with a certain exultation on the troubles of nature with some thought that matter was punished here for no sin? Certain it is that her inner self was strongly stirred.

More than once Colorat and Champion looked at her, and then at each other, as if for them she was transfigured. One spot in particular that they reached in the steep bed of a dry torrent seemed to Véronique to be unspeakably arid. It was with a certain surprise that she found herself longing to hear the sound of falling water in those scorching ravines.

"Always to love!" she thought. The words seemed like a reproach spoken aloud by a voice. In confusion she urged her horse blindly up towards the summit of the mountain of the Corrèze, and in spite of her guides dashed up to the top (called the Living Rock), and stood there alone. For several moments she scanned the whole country below her. She had heard the secret voices of so many existences asking to live, and now something took place within her that determined her to devote herself to this work with all the perseverance which she had already displayed to admiration. She tied her horse's bridle to a tree and sat down on a slab of rock. Her eyes wandered over the land where nature showed herself so harsh a step-dame, and felt within her own heart something of the mother's yearning which she had felt over her child. Her

half-unconscious meditations, which, to use her own beautiful metaphor, "had sifted her heart," had prepared her to receive the sublime teaching of the scene that lay before her.

"It was then," she told the curé, "that I understood that our souls need to be tilled quite as much as the land."

The pale November sunlight shone over the wide landscape, but already a few gray clouds were gathering, driven across the sky by a cold west wind. It was now about three o'clock. Véronique had taken four hours to reach the point; but, as is the wont of those who are gnawed by profound inward misery, she gave no heed to anything without. At that moment her life shared the sublime movement of nature and dilated within her.

"Do not stay up there any longer, madame," said a man's voice, and something in its tone thrilled her. "You cannot reach home again in any direction if you do, for the nearest house lies a couple of leagues away, and it is impossible to find your way through the forest in the dark. And even those risks are nothing compared with the risk you are running where you are; in a few moments it will be deadly cold on the peak; no one knows the why or wherefore, but it has been the death of many a one before now."

Mme. Graslin, looking down, saw a face almost black with sunburn, and two eyes that gleamed from it like tongues of fire. A shock of brown hair hung on either side of the face, and a long pointed beard wagged beneath it. The owner of the face respectfully raised one of the great broad-brimmed hats which the peasantry wear in the midland districts of France, and displayed a bald but magnificent brow, such as sometimes in a poor man compels the attention of passers-by. Véronique felt not the slightest fear; for a woman in such a position as hers, all the petty considerations which cause feminine tremors have ceased to exist.

"How did you come there?" she asked him.

"I live here, hard by," the stranger answered.

"And what do you do in this out-of-the-way place?" asked Véronique.

"I live in it."

"But how, and on what do you live?"

"They pay me a trifle for looking after this part of the forest," he said, pointing to the slopes of the peak opposite the plains of Montégnac. As he moved, Mme. Graslin caught sight of a game-bag and the muzzle of a gun, and any misgivings she might have entertained vanished forthwith.

"Are you a keeper?"

"No, madame. You can't be a keeper until you have been sworn, and you can't take the oath unless you have all your civic rights——"

"Then, who are you?"

"I am Farrabesche," said the man, in deep humility, with his eyes on the ground.

The name told Mme. Graslin nothing. She looked at the man before her. In an exceedingly kindly face there were signs of latent savagery; the uneven teeth gave an ironical turn, a suggestion of evil hardihood to the mouth and blood-red lips. In person he was of middle height, broad in the shoulders, short in the neck, which was very full and deeply sunk. He had the large hairy hands characteristic of violent-tempered people capable of abusing their physical advantages. His last words suggested some mystery, and his bearing, face, and figure all combined to give to that mystery a terrible interpretation.

"So you are in my employ?" Véronique said gently.

"Then have I the honor of speaking to Mme. Graslin?" asked Farrabesche.

"Yes, my friend," said she.

Farrabesche vanished with the speed of some wild creature after a frightened glance at his mistress. Véronique hastily mounted and went down to her two servants; the men were growing uneasy about her, for the inexplicable unwholesome-

ness of the Living Rock was well known in the country. Colorat begged her to go down a little valley into the plain. "It would be dangerous to return by the higher ground," he said; "the tracks were hard to find, and crossed each other, and in spite of his knowledge of the country, he might lose himself."

Once in the plain, Véronique slackened the pace of her horse.

"Who is this Farrabesche whom you employ?" she asked, turning to the head forester.

"Did madame meet him?" exclaimed Colorat.

"Yes, but he ran away."

"Poor fellow! Perhaps he does not know how kind madame is."

"But, after all, what has he done?"

"Why, madame, Farrabesche is a murderer," Champion blurted out.

"Then, of course, he was pardoned, was he not?" Véronique asked in a tremulous voice.

"No, madame," Colorat answered. "Farrabesche was tried at the assizes, and condemned to ten years' penal servitude; but he only did half his time, for they let him off the rest of the sentence; he came back from the hulks in 1827. He owes his life to M. le Curé, who persuaded him to give himself up. Judged by default, and sentenced to death, they would have caught him sooner or later, and he would have been in a bad way. M. Bonnet went out to look for him at the risk of his life. Nobody knows what he said to Farrabesche; they were alone for a couple of days; on the third he brought Farrabesche back to Tulle, and there he gave himself up. M. Bonnet went to see a clever lawyer, and got him to take up Farrabesche's case; and Farrabesche came off with ten years in jail. M. le Curé used to go to see him while he was in prison; and that fellow yonder, who was a terror to the whole countryside, grew as meek as any maid, and let

them take him off to prison quietly. When he came out again, he settled down hereabouts under M. le Curé's direction. People mind what they say to him; he always goes on Sundays and holidays to the services and to mass. He has a seat in the church along with the rest of us, but he always keeps by himself close to the wall. He takes the sacrament from time to time, but at the communion-table he keeps apart too."

"And this man has killed another man!"

"*One?*" asked Colorat; "he has killed a good many, he has! But he is not a bad sort for all that."

"Is it possible?" cried Véronique, and in her amazement she let the bridle fall on the horse's neck.

The head forester asked nothing better than to tell the tale.

"You see, madame," he said, "Farrabesche maybe was in the right at bottom. He was the last of the Farrabesches, an old family in the Corrèze; aye, yes! His eldest brother, Captain Farrabesche, was killed just ten years before in Italy, at Montenotte; only twenty-two he was, and a captain! That is what you might call bad luck, now, isn't it? And he had a little book-learning too; he could read and write, and he had made up his mind to be a general. They were sorry at home when he died, as well they might be, indeed! I was in the army with *The Other** then; and I heard talk of his death. Oh! Captain Farrabesche fell gloriously; he saved the army, he did, and the Little Corporal! I was serving at that time under General Steingel, a German—that is to say, an Alsatian—a fine soldier he was, but shortsighted, and that was how he came by his end, some time after Captain Farrabesche's. The youngest boy, that is, the one yonder, was just six years old when he heard them talking about his big brother's death. The second brother went into the army too, but he went as a private soldier; and died a sergeant, first regiment of the Guard, a fine post, at the battle of Austerlitz,

* *L'Autre*, viz., Napoleon.

where, you see, madame, they manœuvred us all as smoothly as if it had been review day at the Tuileries. I was there myself. Oh! I was lucky; I went through it all, and never came in for a single wound. Well, then, our Farrabesche, the youngest, brave though he was, took it into his head that he would not go for a soldier. And 'tis a fact, the army did not suit that family. When the sub-prefect wanted him in 1811, he took to the woods; a 'refractory conscript,' eh! that's what they used to call them. Thereupon a gang of *chauffeurs* got hold of him by fair means or foul, and he took to warming people's feet at last! You understand that no one except M. le Curé knows what he did along with those rascals, asking their pardon! Many a brush he had with the gendarmes, and the regular troops as well! First and last he has seen seven skirmishes.''

"People say that he killed two soldiers and three gendarmes!'' put in Champion.

"Who is to know how many?'' Colorat answered. "He did not tell them. At last, madame, all the others were caught; but he, an active young fellow, knowing the country as he did, always got away. That gang of *chauffeurs* used to hang on the outskirts of Brives and Tulle, and they would often come over here to lie low, because Farrabesche knew places where they could hide easily. After 1814 nobody troubled about him any more, the conscription was abolished; but he had to spend the year 1815 in the woods. As he could not sit down with his arms folded and live, he helped once more to stop a coach down below yonder in the ravine; but in the end he took M. le Curé's advice, and gave himself up. It was not easy to find witnesses; nobody dared give evidence against him. Then M. le Curé and his lawyer worked so hard for him that they let him off with ten years. He was lucky after being a *chauffeur*, for a *chauffeur* he was.''

"But what is a *chauffeur?*''

"If you like, madame, I will just tell you the sort of thing

they did, by all that I can make out from one and another, for you will understand that I was never a *chauffeur* myself. It was not nice, but necessity knows no law. It was like this: if they suspected some farmer or landowner of having money in his possession, seven or eight of them would drop in in the middle of the night, and they would light a fire and have supper there and then; when supper was over, if the master of the house would not give them as much money as they asked, they would tie his feet up to the pot-hook at the back of the fire, and would not let him go until they had what they asked for. That was all. They came in masks. With so many expeditions, there were a few mishaps. Lord! yes; there are obstinate folk and stingy people everywhere. There was a farmer once, old Cochegrue, a regular skinflint he was, he let them burn his feet; and, well, the man died of it. There was M. David's wife too, not far from Brives; she died afterwards of the fright they gave her, simply seeing them tie her husband's feet. 'Just give them what you have!' she said to him as she went. He would not, and she showed them the hiding-place. For five years the *chauffeurs* were the terror of the countryside; but get this well into your pate—I beg pardon, madame!—that more than one of them belonged to good families, and that sort of people are not the ones to let themselves be nabbed."

Mme. Graslin listened and made no reply. There was a moment's pause; then young Champion, eager to interest his mistress in his turn, was anxious to tell what he knew of Farrabesche.

"Madame ought to hear the whole truth of the matter. Farrabesche has not his match on horseback or afoot. He will fell an ox with a blow of his fist! He can carry seven-hundred weight, that he can! and there is not a better shot anywhere. When I was a little chap they used to tell me tales about Farrabesche. One day he and three of his comrades were surprised; they fought till one was killed and two

were wounded; well, and good, Farrabesche saw that he was caught; bah! he jumps on a gendarme's horse behind the man, claps spurs to the animal, which bolts off at a furious gallop and is out of sight, he gripping that gendarme round the waist all the time; he hugged the man so tight that after a while he managed to fling him off and ride single in the saddle, so he escaped and came by a horse. And he had the impudence to sell it directly afterwards ten leagues on the other side of Limoges. He lay in hiding for three months after that exploit, and no one could find him. They offered a reward of a hundred louis to any one who would betray him."

"Another time," added Colorat, "as to those hundred louis put on his head by the prefect at Tulle, Farrabesche put a cousin of his in the way of earning it—Giriex it was, over at Vizay. His cousin denounced him, and seemed as if he meant to give him up. Oh! he actually gave him up; and very glad the gendarmes were to take him to Tulle. But he did not go far; they had to put him in the prison at Lubersac, and he got away the very first night, by way of a hole made by one of the gang, one Gabilleau, a deserter from the 17th, executed at Tulle, who was moved away the night before he expected to escape. A pretty character Farrabesche gained by these adventures. The troop had trusty friends, you know. And, besides, people liked the *chauffeurs*. Lord, they were quite different then from what they are nowadays, jolly fellows every one of them, that spent their money like princes. Just imagine it, madame; finds the gendarmes on his track one evening, does he? Well, he slipped through their fingers that time by lying twenty-four hours in a pond in a farmyard, drawing his breath through a hole in the straw at the edge of a dung-heap. What did a little discomfort like that matter to him when he had spent whole nights up among the little branches at the very top of a tree where a sparrow could hardly hold, watching the soldiers looking for him, passing and repassing below. Farrabesche was one of the five or six

chauffeurs whom they never could catch; for as he was a fellow-countryman, and joined the gang perforce (for, after all, he only took to the woods to escape the conscription), all the women took his part, and that counts for much."

"So Farrabesche has really killed several men," Mme. Graslin said again.

"Certainly," Colorat replied; "they even say that it was he who murdered the traveler in the coach in 1812; but the courier and postillion, the only witnesses who could have identified him, were dead when he came up for trial."

"And the robbery?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Oh! They took all there was; but the five-and-twenty thousand francs which they found belonged to the government."

For another league Mme. Graslin rode on in silence. The sun had set, and in the moonlight the gray plain looked like the open sea. Once or twice Champion and Colorat looked at Mme. Graslin, for her silence made them uneasy, and both were greatly disturbed to see that her eyes were red with much weeping and full of tears, which fell drop by drop and glittered on her cheeks.

"Oh! don't be sorry for him, madame," said Colorat. "The fellow led a jolly life, and has had pretty sweethearts. And if the police keep an eye on him now, he is protected by M. le Curé's esteem and friendship; for he repented, and in the convict's prison behaved in the most exemplary way. Everybody knows that he is as good as the best among us; only he is so proud, he has no mind to lay himself open to any slight, but he lives peaceably and does good after his fashion. Over the other side of the Living Rock he has ten acres or so of young saplings of his own planting; and when he sees a place for a tree in the forest, he will stick one of them in. Then he lops off the dead branches, and collects the wood, and does it up in faggots ready for poor people. And the poor people, knowing that they can have firewood all ready

for the asking, go to him instead of helping themselves and damaging your woods. So if he still 'warms people's feet,' as you may say, it does them good now. Farrabesche is fond of your forest; he looks after it as if it were his own."

"And yet he lives!—— quite alone." Mme. Graslin hastily added the last two words.

"Asking your pardon, madame, no. He is bringing up a little lad; going fifteen now he is," said Maurice Champion.

"Faith, yes, that he is," Colorat remarked, "for La Curieux had that child a good while before Farrabesche gave himself up."

"Is it his son?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Well, every one thinks so."

"And why did he not marry the girl?"

"Why? Because they would have caught him! And, besides, when La Curieux knew that he was condemned, she left the neighborhood, poor thing."

"Was she pretty?"

"Oh, my mother says that she was very much like—dear me! another girl who left the place too—very much like Denise Tascheron."

"Was he loved?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Bah! yes, because he was a *chauffeur!*" said Colorat. "The women always fall in love with anything out of the way. But for all that, nothing astonished people hereabouts so much as this love affair. Catherine Curieux was a good girl who lived like a virgin saint; she was looked on as a paragon of virtue in her neighborhood over at Vizay, a large village in the Corrèze, on the boundary of two departments. Her father and mother were tenants of M. Brézac's. Catherine Curieux was quite seventeen years old at the time of Farrabesche's sentence. The Farrabesches were an old family out of the same district, but they settled on the Montégnac lands; they had the largest farm in the village. Farrabesche's father and mother are dead now, and La Curieux's three

sisters are married; one lives at Aubusson, one at Limoges, and one at Saint-Léonard."

"Do you think that Farrabesche knows where Catherine is?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"If he knew, he would break his bounds. Oh! he would go to her—— As soon as he came back he asked her father and mother (through M. Bonnet) for the child. La Curieux's father and mother were taking care of the child; M. Bonnet persuaded them to give him up to Farrabesche."

"Does nobody know what became of her?"

"Bah!" said Colorat. "The lass thought herself ruined, she was afraid to stop in the place! She went to Paris. What does she do there? That is the rub. As for looking for her in Paris, you might as well try to find a marble among the flints there in the plain."

Colorat pointed to the plain of Montégnac as he spoke. By this time Mme. Graslin was only a few paces from the great gateway of the château. Mme. Sauviat, in anxiety, was waiting there for her with Aline and the servants; they did not know what to think of so long an absence.

"Well," said Mme. Sauviat, as she helped her daughter to dismount, "you must be horribly tired."

"No, dear mother," Mme. Graslin answered, in an unsteady voice, and Mme. Sauviat, looking at her daughter, saw that she had been weeping for a long time.

Mme. Graslin went into the house with Aline, her confidential servant, and shut herself into her room. She would not see her mother; and when Mme. Sauviat tried to enter, Aline met the old Auvergnate with "Madame is asleep."

The next morning Véronique set out on horseback, with Maurice as her sole guide. She took the way by which they had returned the evening before, so as to reach the Living Rock as quickly as might be. As they climbed up the ravine which separates the last ridge in the forest from the actual

summit of the mountain (for the Living Rock, seen from the plain, seems to stand alone), Véronique bade Maurice show her the way to Farrabesche's cabin and wait with the horses until she came back. She meant to go alone. Maurice went with her as far as a pathway which turned off towards the opposite side of the Living Rock, farthest from the plain, and pointed out the thatched roof of a cottage half-hidden on the mountain side; below it lay the nursery-ground of which Colorat had spoken.

It was almost noon. A thin streak of smoke rising from the cottage chimney guided Véronique, who soon reached the place, but would not show herself at first. At the sight of the little dwelling, and the garden about it, with its fence of dead thorns, she stood for a few moments lost in thoughts known to her alone. Several acres of grass land, enclosed by a quickset hedge, wound away beyond the garden; the low-spreading branches of apple and pear and plum trees were visible here and there in the field. Above the house, on the sandier soil of the high mountain slopes, there rose a splendid grove of tall chestnut trees, their topmost leaves turned yellow and sere.

Mme. Graslin pushed open the crazy wicket which did duty as a gate, and saw before her the shed, the little yard, and all the picturesque and living details of the dwellings of the poor. Something surely of the grace of the open fields hovers about them. Who is there that is not moved by the revelation of lowly, almost vegetative lives—the clothes drying on the hedge, the rope of onions hanging from the roof, the iron cooking pots set out in the sun, the wooden bench hidden among the honeysuckle leaves, the houseleeks that grow on the ridges of almost every thatched hovel in France?

Véronique found it impossible to appear unannounced in her keeper's cottage, for two fine hunting-dogs began to bark as soon as they heard the rustle of her riding habit on the dead leaves; she gathered up her skirts on her arm, and went

towards the house. Farrabesche and the boy were sitting on a wooden bench outside. Both rose to their feet and uncovered respectfully, but without a trace of servility.

"I have been told that you are seeing after my interests," said Véronique, with her eyes fixed on the lad; "so I determined to see your cottage and nursery of saplings for myself, and to ask you about some improvements."

"I am at your service, madame," replied Farrabesche.

Véronique was admiring the lad. It was a charming face; somewhat sunburned and brown, but in shape a faultless oval; the outlines of the forehead were delicately fine, the orange-colored eyes exceedingly bright and alert; the long dark hair, parted on the forehead, fell upon either side of the brow. Taller than most boys of his age, he was very nearly five feet high. His trousers were of the same coarse brown linen as his shirt; he wore a threadbare waistcoat of rough blue cloth with horn buttons, a short jacket of the material facetiously described as "Maurienne velvet," in which Savoyards are wont to dress, and a pair of iron-bound shoes on his otherwise bare feet to complete the costume. His father was dressed in the same fashion; but instead of the little lad's brown woolen cap, Farrabesche wore the wide-brimmed peasant's hat. In spite of its quick intelligence, the child's face bore the look of gravity (evidently unforced) peculiar to young creatures brought up in solitude; he must have put himself in harmony with the silence and the life of the forest. Indeed, in both Farrabesche and his son the physical side of their natures seemed to be the most highly developed; they possessed the peculiar faculties of the savage—the keen sight, the alertness, the complete mastery of the body as an instrument, the quick hearing, the signs of activity and intelligent skill. No sooner did the boy's eyes turn to his father than Mme. Graslin divined that here was the limitless affection in which the promptings of natural instinct and deliberate thought were confirmed by the most effectual happiness.

"Is this the child of whom I have heard?" asked Véronique, indicating the lad.

"Yes, madame."

Véronique signed to Farrabesche to come a few paces away. "But have you taken no steps towards finding his mother?" she asked.

"Madame does not know, of course, that I am not allowed to go beyond the bounds of the commune where I am living——"

"And have you never heard of her?"

"When my time was out," he said, "the commissary paid over to me the sum of a thousand francs, which had been sent me, a little at a time, every quarter; the rules would not allow me to have it until I came out. I thought that no one but Catherine would have thought of me, as it was not M. Bonnet who sent it; so I am keeping the money for Benjamin."

"And how about Catherine's relations?"

"They thought no more about her after she went away. Besides, they did their part by looking after the child."

Véronique turned to go towards the house.

"Very well, Farrabesche," she said; "I will have inquiry made, so as to make sure that Catherine is still living, and where she is, and what kind of life she is leading——"

"Madame, whatever she may be, I shall look upon it as good fortune to have her for my wife," the man cried in a softened tone. "It is for her to show reluctance, not for me. Our marriage will legitimate the poor boy, who has no suspicion yet of how he stands."

The look in the father's eyes told the tale of the life these two outcasts led in their voluntary exile; they were all in all to each other, like two fellow-countrymen in the midst of a desert.

"So you love Catherine?" asked Véronique.

"It is not so much that I love her, madame," he answered,

"as that, placed as I am, she is the one woman in the world for me."

Mme. Graslin turned swiftly, and went as far as the chestnut trees, as if some pang had shot through her. The keeper thought that this was some whim of hers, and did not venture to follow. For nearly a quarter of an hour she sat, apparently engaged in looking out over the landscape. She could see all that part of the forest which lay along the side of the valley, with the torrent in the bottom; it was dry now, and full of boulders, a sort of huge ditch shut in between the forest-covered mountains above Montégnac and another parallel range, these last hills being steep though low, and so bare that there was scarcely so much as a starveling tree here and there to crown the slopes, where a few rather melancholy-looking birches, juniper bushes, and briars were trying to grow. This second range belonged to a neighboring estate, and lay in the department of the Corrèze; indeed, the cross-road which meanders along the winding valley is the boundary line of the *arrondissement* of Montégnac, and also of the two estates. The opposite side of the valley beyond the torrent was quite unsheltered and barren enough. It was a sort of long wall with a slope of fine woodland behind it, and a complete contrast in its bleakness to the side of the mountain on which Farrabesche's cottage stood. Gnarled and twisted forms on the one side, and on the other shapely growths and delicate curving lines; on the one side the dreary, unchanging silence of a sloping desert, held in place by blocks of stone and bare, denuded rocks, and on the other, the contrasts of green among the trees. Many of them were leafless now, but the fine variegated tree-trunks stood up straight and tall on each ledge, and the branches waved as the wind stirred through them. A few of them, the oaks, elms, beeches, and chestnuts which held out longer against the autumn than the rest, still retained their leaves—golden, or bronze, or purple.

In the direction of Montégnac the valley opens out so

widely that the two sides describe a vast horsehoe. Véronique, with her back against a chestnut tree, could see glen after glen arranged like the stages of an amphitheatre, the topmost crests of the trees rising one above the other in rows like the heads of spectators. On the other side of the ridge lay her own park, in which, at a later time, this beautiful hillside was included. Near Farrabesche's cottage the valley grew narrower and narrower, till it closed in as a gully scarce a hundred feet across.

The beauty of the view over which Mme. Graslin's eyes wandered, heedlessly at first, soon recalled her to herself. She went back to the cottage, where the father and son were standing in silence, making no attempt to explain the strange departure of their mistress. Véronique looked at the house. It was more solidly built than the thatched roof had led her to suppose; doubtless it had been left to go to ruin at the time when the Navarreins ceased to trouble themselves about the estate. No sport, no gamekeepers. But though no one had lived in it for a century, the walls held good in spite of the ivy and climbing plants which clung about them on every side. Farrabesche himself had thatched the roof when he received permission to live there; he had laid the stone-flags on the floor, and brought in such furniture as there was.

Véronique went inside the cottage. Two beds, such as the peasants use, met her eyes; there was a large cupboard of walnut-wood, a hutch for bread, a dresser, a table, three chairs, a few brown earthen platters on the shelves of the dresser; in fact, all the necessary household gear. A couple of guns and a game-bag hung above the mantle-shelf. It went to Véronique's heart to see how many things the father had made for the little one; there was a toy man-of-war, a fishing smack, and a carved wooden cup, a chest wonderfully ornamented, a little box decorated with mosaic work in straw, a beautifully-wrought crucifix and rosary. The rosary was made of plum-stones; on each a head had been carved with wonder-

ful skill—Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Madonna, St. John the Baptist, St. Anne, the two Magdalens.

"I did it to amuse the child during the long winter evenings," he said, with something of apology in his tone.

Jessamine and climbing roses covered the front of the house, and broke into blossom about the upper windows. Farrabesche used the first floor as a storeroom; he kept poultry, ducks, and a couple of pigs, and bought nothing but bread, salt, sugar, and such groceries as they needed. Neither he nor the lad drank wine.

"Everything that I have seen and heard of you," Mme. Graslin said at last, turning to Farrabesche, "has led me to take an interest in you which shall not come to nothing."

"This is M. Bonnet's doing, I know right well!" cried Farrabesche with touching fervor.

"You are mistaken; M. le Curé has said nothing to me of you as yet; chance or God, it may be, has brought it all about."

"Yes, madame, it is God's doing; God alone can work wonders for such a wretch as I."

"If your life has been a wretched one," said Mme. Graslin, in tones so low that they did not reach the boy (a piece of womanly feeling which touched Farrabesche), "your repentance, your conduct, and M. Bonnet's good opinion should go far to retrieve it. I have given orders that the buildings on the large farm near the château which M. Graslin planned are to be finished; you shall be my steward there; you will find scope for your energies and employment for your son. The public prosecutor at Limoges shall be informed of your case, and I will engage that the humiliating restrictions which make your life a burden to you shall be removed."

Farrabesche dropped down on his knees as if thunderstruck at the words which opened out a prospect of the realization of hopes hitherto cherished in vain. He kissed the hem of Mme. Graslin's riding habit; he kissed her feet. Benjamin saw the

tears in his father's eyes, and began to sob without knowing why.

"Do not kneel, Farrabesche," said Mme. Graslin; "you do not know how natural it is that I should do for you these things that I have promised to do—— Did you not plant those trees?" she added, pointing to one or two pitch-pines, Norway pines, firs, and larches at the base of the arid, thirsty hillside opposite.

"Yes, madame."

"Then is the soil better just there?"

"The water is always wearing the rocks away, so there is a little light soil washed down on to your land, and I took advantage of it, for all the valley down below the road belongs to you; the road is the boundary line."

"Then does a good deal of water flow down the length of the valley?"

"Oh! in a few days, madame, if the weather sets in rainy, you will maybe hear the roaring of the torrent over at the château! but even then it is nothing compared with what it will be when the snow melts. All the water from the whole mountain side there at the back of your park and gardens flows into it; in fact, all the streams hereabouts flow down to the torrent, and the water comes down like a deluge. Luckily for you, the tree-roots on your side of the valley bind the soil together, and the water slips off the leaves, for the fallen leaves here in autumn are like an oilcloth cover for the land, or it would all be washed down into the valley bottom, and the bed of the torrent is so steep that I doubt whether the soil would stop there."

"What becomes of all the water?" asked Mme. Graslin.

Farrabesche pointed to the gully which seemed to shut in the valley below his cottage.

"It pours out over a chalky bit of level ground that separates Limousin from the Corrèze, and there it lies for several months in stagnant green pools, sinking slowly down into the

soil. That is how the common came to be so unhealthy that no one lives there, and nothing can be done with it. No kind of cattle will pasture on the reeds and rushes in those brackish pools. Perhaps there are three thousand acres of it altogether; it is the common land of three parishes; but it is just like the plain of Montégnac, you can do nothing with it. And down in your plain there is a certain amount of sand and a little soil among the flints, but here there is nothing but the bare tufa."

"Send for the horses; I mean to see all this for myself."

Mme. Graslin told Benjamin where she had left Maurice, and the lad went forthwith.

"They tell me that you know every yard of this country," Mme. Graslin continued; "can you explain to me how it happens that no water flows into the plain of Montégnac from my side of the ridge? there is not the smallest torrent there even in rainy weather or in the time of the melting of the snows."

"Ah! madame," Farrabesche answered, "M. le Curé, who is always thinking of the prosperity of Montégnac, guessed the cause, but had not proof of it. Since you came here, he told me to mark the course of every runnel in every little valley. I had been looking at the lay of the land yesterday, and was on my way back when I had the honor of meeting you at the base of the Living Rock. I heard the sound of horsehoofs, and I wanted to know who was passing this way. Madame, M. Bonnet is not only a saint, he is a man of science. 'Farrabesche,' said he (I being at work at the time on the road which the commune finished up to the château for you)—'Farrabesche, if no water from this side of the hill reaches the plain below, it must be because nature has some sort of drainage arrangement for carrying it off elsewhere.' Well, madame, the remark is so simple that it looks downright trite, as if any child might have made it. But nobody since Montégnac was Montégnac, neither great lords, nor stewards, nor

keepers, nor rich, nor poor, though the plain lay there before their eyes with nothing growing on it for want of water, not one of them ever thought of asking what became of the water in the Gabou. The stagnant water gives them the fever in three communes, but they never thought of looking for the remedy; and I myself never dreamed of it; it took a man of God to see that——"

Farrabesche's eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

"The discoveries of men of genius are all so simple, that every one thinks he could have found them out," said Mme. Graslin; and to herself she added, "But there is this grand thing about genius, that while it is akin to all others, no one resembles it."

"At once I saw what M. Bonnet meant," Farrabesche went on. "He had not to use a lot of long words to explain my job to me. To make the thing all the queerer, madame, all the ridge above your plain (for it all belongs to you) is full of pretty deep cracks, ravines, and gullies, and whatnot; but all the water that flows down the valleys, clefts, ravines, and gorges, every channel, in fact, empties itself into a little valley a few feet lower than the level of your plain, madame. I know the cause of this state of things to-day, and here it is: There is a sort of embankment of rock (*schist*, M. Bonnet calls it) twenty or thirty feet thick, which runs in an unbroken line all round the bases of the hills between Montégnac and the Living Rock. The earth being softer than the stone, has been worn away and been hollowed out; so, naturally the water all flows round into the Gabou, eating its passage out of each valley. The trees and thickets and brushwood hide the lay of the land; but when you follow the streams and track their passage, it is easy to convince yourself of the facts. In this way both hillsides drain into the Gabou, all the water from this side that we see, and the other over the ridge where your park lies, as well as from the rocks opposite. M. le Curé thinks that this state of things would work its own cure when

the water-courses on your side of the ridge are blocked up at the mouth by the rocks and soil washed down from above, so that they raise barriers between themselves and the Gabou. When that time comes your plain will be flooded in turn like the common land you are just about to see ; but it would take hundreds of years to bring that about. And, besides, is it a thing to wish for, madame? Suppose that your plain of Montégnac should not suck up all that water, like the common land here, there would be some more standing pools there to poison the whole country."

"So the places M. le Curé pointed out to me a few days ago, where the trees are still green, must mark the natural channels through which the water flows down into the Gabou?"

"Yes, madame. There are three hills between the Living Rock and Montégnac, and consequently there are three water-courses, and the streams that flow down them, banked in by the schist barrier, turn to the Gabou. That belt of wood still green, round the base of the hills, looks as if it were part of your plain, but it marks the course of the channel which was there, as M. le Curé guessed it would be."

"The misfortune will soon turn to a blessing for Montégnac," said Mme. Graslin, with deep conviction in her tones. "And since you have been the first instrument, you shall share in the work; you shall find active and willing workers, for hard work and perseverance must make up for the money which we lack."

Mme. Graslin had scarcely finished the sentence when Benjamin and Maurice came up ; she caught at her horse's bridle, and, by a gesture, bade Farrabesche mount Maurice's horse.

"Now bring me to the place where the water drowns the common land," she said.

"It will be so much the better that you should go, madame, since that the late M. Graslin, acting on M. Bonnet's advice, bought about three hundred acres of land at the mouth of the gully where the mud has been deposited by the torrent, so

that over a certain area there is some depth of rich soil. Madame will see the other side of the Living Rock ; there is some magnificent timber there, and doubtless M. Graslin would have had a farm on the spot. The best situation would be a place where the little stream that rises near my house sinks into the ground again ; it might be turned to advantage."

Farrabesche led the way, and Véronique followed down a steep path towards a spot where the two sides of the gully drew in, and then separated sharply to east and west, as if divided by some earthquake shock. The gully was about sixty feet across. Tall grasses were growing among the huge boulders in the bottom. On the one side the Living Rock, cut to the quick, stood up a solid surface of granite without the slightest flaw in it ; but the height of the uncompromising rock-wall was crowned with the overhanging roots of trees, for the pines clutched the soil with their branching roots, seeming to grasp the granite as a bird clings to a bough ; but on the other side the rock was yellow and sandy, and hollowed out by the weather : there was no depth in the caverns, no boldness in the hollows of the soft crumbling ochre-tinted rock. A few prickly-leaved plants, burdocks, reeds, and water-plants at its base were sufficient signs of a north aspect and poor soil. Evidently the two ranges, though parallel, and as it were blended at the time of the great cataclysm which changed the surface of the globe, were composed of entirely different materials—an inexplicable freak of nature, or the result of some unknown cause which waits for genius to discover it. In this place the contrast between them was most strikingly apparent.

Véronique saw in front of her a vast dry plateau. There was no sign of plant-life anywhere ; the chalky soil explained the infiltration of the water, only a few stagnant pools remained here and there where the surface was incrusted. To the right stretched the mountains of the Corrèze, and to the

FARRABESCHE LED THE WAY, AND VÉRONIQUE FOLLOWED.



left the eye was arrested by the huge mass of the Living Rock, the tall forest trees that clothed its sides, and two hundred acres of grass below the forest, in strong contrast with the ghastly solitude about them.

"My son and I made the ditch that you see down yonder," said Farrabesche; "you can see it by the line of tall grass; it will be connected shortly with the ditch that marks the edge of your forest. Your property is bounded on this side by a desert, for the first village lies a league away."

Véronique galloped into the hideous plain, and her keeper followed. She cleared the ditch and rode at full speed across the dreary waste, seeming to take a kind of wild delight in the vast picture of desolation before her. Farrabesche was right. No skill, no human power could turn that soil to account, the ground rang hollow beneath the horse's hoofs. This was a result of the porous nature of the tufa, but there were cracks and fissures no less through which the flood-water sank out of sight, doubtless to feed some far-off springs.

"And yet there are souls like this!" Véronique exclaimed within herself as she reined in her horse, after a quarter of an hour's gallop.

She mused a while with the desert all about her; there was no living creature, no animal, no insect; birds never crossed the plateau. In the plain of Montégnac there were at any rate the flints, a little sandy or clayey soil, and crumbled rock to make a thin crust of earth a few inches deep as a beginning for cultivation; but here the ungrateful tufa, which had ceased to be earth, and had not become stone, wearied the eyes so cruelly that they were absolutely forced to turn for relief to the illimitable ether of space. Véronique looked along the boundary of her forests and at the meadow which her husband had added to the estate, then she went slowly back towards the mouth of the Gabou. She came suddenly upon Farrabesche, and found him looking into a hole, which might have suggested that some one of a specu-

lative turn had been probing this unlikely spot, imagining that nature had hidden some treasure there.

"What is it?" asked Véronique, noticing the deep sadness of the expression on the manly face.

"Madame, I owe my life to this trench here, or, more properly, I owe to it a space for repentance and time to redeem my faults in the eyes of men——"

The effect of this explanation of life was to nail Mme. Graslin to the spot. She reined in her horse.

"I used to hide here, madame. The ground is so full of echoes, that if I laid my ear to the earth I could catch the sound of the horses of the gendarmerie or the tramp of soldiers (an unmistakable sound that!) more than a league away. Then I used to escape by way of the Gabou. I had a horse ready in a place there, and I always put five or six leagues between myself and them that were after me. Catherine used to bring me food of a night. If she did not find any sign of me, I always found bread and wine left in a hole covered over by a stone."

These recollections of his wild vagrant life, possibly unwholesome recollections for Farrabesche, stirred Véronique's most indulgent pity, but she rode rapidly on towards the Gabou, followed by the keeper. While she scanned the gap, looking down the long valley, so fertile on one side, so forlorn on the other, and saw, more than a league away, the hillside ridges, tier on tier, at the back of Montégnac, Farrabesche said, "There will be famous waterfalls here in a few days."

"And by the same day next year, not a drop of water will ever pass that way again. I am on my own property on either side, so I shall build a wall solid enough and high enough to keep the water in. Instead of a valley which is doing nothing, I shall have a lake, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty feet deep, and about a league across—a vast reservoir for the irrigation channels that shall fertilize the whole plain of Montégnac."

"M. le Curé was right, madame, when he told us, as we were finishing your road, that we were working for our mother; may God give his blessing to such an enterprise."

"Say nothing about it, Farrabesche," said Mme. Graslin; "it is M. Bonnet's idea."

Véronique returned to Farrabesche's cottage, found Maurice, and went back at once to the château. Her mother and Aline were surprised at the change in her face; the hope of doing good to the country had given it a look of something like happiness. Mme. Graslin wrote to M. Grossetête; she wanted him to ask M. de Granville for complete liberty for the poor convict, giving particulars as to his good conduct, which was further vouched for by the mayor's certificate and a letter from M. Bonnet. She also sent other particulars concerning Catherine Curieux, and entreated Grossetête to interest the public prosecutor in her kindly project, and to cause a letter to be written to the prefecture of police in Paris with a view to discovering the girl. The mere fact that Catherine had remitted sums of money to the convict in prison should be a sufficient clue by which to trace her. Véronique had set her heart on knowing the reason why Catherine had failed to come back to her child and to Farrabesche. Then she told her old friend of her discoveries in the torrent bed of the Gabou, and laid stress on the necessity of finding the clever man for whom she had already asked him.

The next day was Sunday. For the first time since Véronique took up her abode in Montégnac, she felt able to go to church for mass. She went and took possession of her pew in the Lady Chapel. Looking round her, she saw how bare the poverty-stricken church was, and determined to set by a certain sum every year for repairs and the decoration of the altars. She heard the words of the priest, tender, gracious, and divine; for the sermon, couched in such simple language that all present could understand it, was in truth sublime.

The sublime comes from the heart; it is not to be found by effort of the intellect; and religion is an inexhaustible source of sublime thoughts with no false glitter of brilliancy, for the catholicism which penetrates and changes hearts is wholly of the heart. M. Bonnet found in the epistle a text for his sermon, to the effect that soon or late God fulfills his promises, watches over his own, and encourages the good. He made it clear that great things would be the result of the presence of a rich and charitable resident in the parish, by pointing out that the duties of the poor towards the beneficent rich were as extensive as those of the rich towards the poor, and that the relation should be one of mutual help.

Farrabesche had spoken to some of those who were glad to see him (one consequence of the spirit of Christian charity which M. Bonnet had infused into practical action in his parish), and had told them of Mme. Graslin's kindness to him. All the commune had talked this over in the square below the church, where, according to country custom, they gathered together before mass. Nothing could more completely have won the good-will of these folk, who are so readily touched by any kindness shown to them; and when Véronique came out of church she found almost all the parish standing in a double row. All hats went off respectfully and in deep silence as she passed. This welcome touched her, though she did not know the real reason of it. Among the last of all she saw Farrabesche, and spoke to him.

"You are a good sportsman; do not forget to send us some game."

A few days after this Véronique walked with the curé in that part of the forest nearest her château; she determined to descend the ridges which she had seen from the Living Rock, ranged tier on tier on the other side of the hill. With the curé's assistance she would ascertain the exact position of the higher affluents of the Gabou. The result was the discovery by the curé of the fact that the streams which water Upper

Montégnac really rose in the mountains of the Corrèze. These ranges were united to the mountain by the arid rib of hill which ran parallel to the chain of the Living Rock. The curé came back from that walk with boyish glee; he saw, with the *naïveté* of a poet, the prosperity of the village that he loved. And what is a poet but a man who realizes his dreams before the time? M. Bonnet reaped his harvests as he looked down from the terrace at the barren plain.

Farrabesche and his son came up to the château next morning loaded with game. The keeper had brought a cup for Francis Graslin; it was nothing less than a masterpiece—a battle-scene carved on a cocoanut shell. Mme. Graslin happened to be walking on the terrace, on the side that overlooked "Tascherons." She sat down on a garden seat, and looked long at that fairy's work. Tears came into her eyes from time to time.

"You must have been very unhappy," she said, addressing Farrabesche after a silence.

"What could I do, madame?" he answered. "I was there without the hope of escape, which makes life bearable to almost all the convicts——"

"It is an appalling life!" she said, and her look and compassionate tones invited Farrabesche to speak.

In Mme. Graslin's convulsive tremor and evident emotion Farrabesche saw nothing but the overwrought interest excited by pitying curiosity. Just at that moment Mme. Sauviat appeared in one of the garden walks, and seemed about to join them, but Véronique drew out her handkerchief and motioned her away. "Let me be, mother," she cried, in sharper tones than she had ever before used to the old Auvergnate.

"For five years I wore a chain riveted here to a heavy iron ring, madame," Farrabesche said, pointing to his leg. "I was fastened to another man. I have had to live like that with three convicts first and last. I used to lie on a wooden

camp bedstead, and I had to work uncommonly hard to get a thin mattress, called a *serpentin*. There were eight hundred men in each ward. Each of the beds (*tolards*, they called them) held twenty-four men, all chained together two and two, and nights and mornings they passed a long chain called the 'bilboes string,' in and out of the chains that bound each couple together, and made it fast to the *tolard*, so that all of us were fastened down by the feet. Even after a couple of years of it, I could not get used to the clank of those chains; every moment they said, 'You are in a convicts' prison!' If you dropped off to sleep for a minute, some rogue or other would begin to wrangle or turn himself round, and put you in mind of your plight. You had to serve an apprenticeship to learn how to sleep. I could not sleep at all, in fact, unless I was utterly exhausted with a heavy day's work.

"After I managed to sleep, I had, at any rate, the night when I could forget things. Forgetfulness—that is something, madame! Once a man is there, he must learn to satisfy his needs after a manner fixed by the most pitiless rules. You can judge, madame, what sort of effect this life was like to have on me, a young fellow who had always lived in the woods, like the wild goats and the birds! Ah! if I had not eaten my bread cooped up in the four walls of a prison for six months beforehand, I should have thrown myself into the sea at the sight of my mates, for all the beautiful things M. Bonnet said, and (I may say it) he has been the father of my soul. I did pretty well in the open air; but when once I was shut up in the ward to sleep or eat (for we ate our food there out of troughs, three couples to each trough), it took all the life out of me; the dreadful faces and the language of the others always sickened me. Luckily, at five o'clock in the summer, and half-past seven in winter, out we went in spite of heat or cold or wind or rain, in the 'jail gang'—that means to work. So we were out of doors most of our time, and the open air seems very good to you when you come out

of a place where eight hundred convicts herd together. The air, you must always remember, is sea-air! You enjoy the breeze, the sun is like a friend, and you watch the clouds pass over, and look for hopeful signs of a beautiful day. For my own part, I took an interest in my work."

Farrabesche stopped, for two great tears rolled down Véronique's cheeks.

"Oh! madame, these are only the roses of that existence!" he cried, taking the expression on Mme. Graslin's face for pity of his lot. "These are the dreadful precautions the government takes to make sure of us, the inquisition kept up by the warders, the inspection of fetters morning and evening, the coarse food, the hideous clothes that humiliate you at every moment, the constrained position while you sleep, the frightful sound of four hundred double chains clanking in an echoing ward, the prospect of being mowed down with grapeshot if half-a-dozen scoundrels take it into their heads to rebel—all these horrible things are nothing, they are the roses of that life, as I said before. Any respectable man unlucky enough to be sent there must die of disgust before very long. You have to live day and night with another convict; you have to endure the company of five more at every meal, and twenty-three at night; you have to listen to their talk.

"The convicts have secret laws among themselves, madame; if you make an outlaw of yourself, they will murder you; if you submit, you become a murderer. You have your choice—you must be either victim or executioner. After all, if you die at a blow, that would put an end to you and your troubles; but they are too cunning in wickedness, it is impossible to hold out against their hatred: any one whom they dislike is completely at their mercy, they can make every moment of his life one constant torture worse than death. Any man who repents and tries to behave well is the common enemy, and more particularly they suspect him of tale-telling.

They will take a man's life on a mere suspicion of tale-telling. Every ward has its tribunal, where they try crimes against the convicts' laws. It is an offense not to conform to their customs, and a man may be punished for that. For instance, everybody is bound to help the escape of a convict; every convict has his chance of escape in turn, when the whole prison is bound to give him help and protection. It is a crime to reveal anything done by a convict to further his escape. I will not speak of the horrible moral tone of the prison; strictly speaking, it has nothing to do with the subject. The prison authorities chain men of opposite dispositions together, so as to neutralize any attempt at escape or rebellion; and always put those who either could not endure each other, or were suspicious of each other, on the same chain."

"What did you do?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Oh! it was like this, I had luck," said Farrabesche; "the lot never fell to me to kill a doomed man; I never voted the death of anybody, no matter whom; I was never punished, no one took a dislike to me, and I lived comfortably with the three mates they gave me one after another—all three of them feared and liked me. But then I was well known in the prison before I got there, madame. A *chauffeur!* for I was supposed to be one of those brigands. I have seen them do it," Farrabesche went on in a low voice, after a pause, "but I never would help to torture folk, nor take any of the stolen money. I was a 'refractory conscript,' that was all. I used to help the rest, I was scout for them, I fought, I was forlorn sentinel, rearguard, what you will, but I never shed blood except in self-defense. Oh! I told M. Bonnet and my lawyer everything, and the judges knew quite well that I was not a murderer. But, all the same, I am a great criminal; the things that I have done are all against the law.

"Two of my old comrades had told them about me before I came. I was a man of whom the greatest things might be

expected, they said. In the convicts' prison, you see, madame, there is nothing like a character of that kind ; it is worth even more than money. A murder is a passport in this republic of wretchedness ; they leave you in peace. I did nothing to destroy their opinion of me. I looked gloomy and resigned ; it was possible to be misled by my face, and they were misled. My sullen manner and my silence were taken for signs of ferocity. Every one there, convicts and warders, young and old, respected me. I was president of my ward. I was never tormented at night, nor suspected of tale-telling. I lived honestly according to their rules ; I never refused to do any one a good turn ; I never showed a sign of disgust ; in short, I 'howled with the wolves,' to all appearance, and in my secret soul I prayed to God. My last mate was a soldier, a lad of two-and-twenty, who had stolen something, and then deserted in consequence ; I had him for four years. We were friends, and wherever I may be I can reckon on *him* when he comes out. The poor wretch, Guépin they called him, was not a rascal, he was only a harebrained boy ; his ten years will sober him down. Oh ! if the rest had known that it was religion that reconciled me to my fate ; that when my time was up I meant to live in some corner without letting them know where I was, to forget those fearful creatures, and never to be in the way of meeting one of them again, they would very likely have driven me mad."

"But, then, suppose that some unhappy, sensitive boy had been carried away by passion, and—pardoned so far as the death penalty is concerned——?"

"Madame, a murderer is never fully pardoned. They begin by commuting the sentence for twenty years of penal servitude. But for a decent young fellow it is a thing to shudder at ! It is impossible to tell you about the life in store for him ; it would be a hundred times better for him that he should die ! Yes, for such a death on the scaffold is good fortune."

"I did not dare to think it," said Mme. Graslin.

Véronique had grown white as wax. She leaned her fore head against the balustrade to hide her face for several moments. Farrabesche did not know whether he ought to go or stay. Then Mme. Graslin rose to her feet, and with an almost queenly look she said, to Farrabesche's great astonishment, "Thank you, my friend!" in tones that went to his heart. Then after a pause—"Where did you draw courage to live and suffer as you did?" she asked.

"Ah, madame, M. Bonnet had set a treasure in my soul! That is why I love him more than I have ever loved any one else in this world."

"More than Catherine?" asked Mme. Graslin, with a certain bitterness in her smile.

"Ah, madame, almost as much."

"How did he do it?"

"Madame, the things that he said and the tones of his voice subdued me. It was Catherine who showed him the way to the hiding-place in the chalk-land which I showed you the other day. He came to me quite alone. He was the new curé of Montégnac, he told me; I was his parishioner, I was dear to him, he knew that I had only strayed from the path, that I was not yet lost; he did not mean to betray me, but to save me; in fact, he said things that thrill you to the very depths of your nature. And you see, madame, he can make you do right with all the force that other people take to make you do wrong. He told me, poor dear man, that Catherine was a mother; I was about to give over two creatures to shame and neglect. 'Very well,' said I, 'then they will be just as I am; I have no future before me.' He answered that I had two futures before me, and both of them bad—one in this world, the other in the next—unless I desisted and reformed. Here below I was bound to die on the scaffold. If I were caught, my defense would break down in a court of law. On the other hand, if I took advantage of the mildness of the new government towards 'refractory conscripts' of many

years' standing, and gave myself up, he would strain every nerve to save my life. He would find me a clever advocate who would pull me through with ten years' penal servitude. After that M. Bonnet talked to me of another life. Catherine cried like a Magdalen at that. There, madame," said Farrabesche, holding out his right hand, "she laid her face against *this*, and I felt it quite wet with her tears. She prayed me to live! M. le Curé promised to contrive a quiet and happy lot for me and my child, even in this district, and undertook that no one should cast up the past to me. In short, he lectured me as if I had been a little boy. After three of those nightly visits I was as pliant as a glove. Do you care to know why, madame?"

Farrabesche and Mme. Graslin looked at each other, and neither of them to their secret souls explained the real motive of their mutual curiosity.

"Very well," the poor ticket-of-leave man continued, "the first time when he had gone away, and Catherine went, too, to show him the way back, and I was left alone, I felt a kind of freshness and calm happiness such as I had not known since I was a child. It was something like the happiness I had felt with poor Catherine. The love of this dear man, who had come to seek me out, the interest that he took in me, in my future, in my soul—it all worked upon me and changed me. It was as if a light arose in me. So long as he was with me and talked, I held out. How could I help it? He was a priest, and we bandits do not eat their bread. But when the sound of his footsteps and Catherine's died away—oh! I was, as he said two days later, 'enlightened by grace.'

"From that time forwards God gave me strength to endure everything—the jail, the sentence, the putting on of the irons, the journey, the life in the convicts' prison. I reckoned upon M. Bonnet's promise as upon the truth of the Gospel; I looked on my sufferings as a payment of arrears. Whenever things grew unbearable, I used to see, at the end

of the ten years, this house in the woods, and my little Benjamin and Catherine there. Good M. Bonnet, he kept his promise; but some one else failed me. Catherine was not at the prison-door when I came out, nor yet at the trysting-place on the common lands. She must have died of grief. That is why I am always sad. Now, thanks to you, madame, I shall have work to do that needs doing; I shall put myself into it body and soul, so will my boy for whom I live——"

"You have shown me how it was that M. le Curé could bring about the changes in his parish——"

"Oh! nothing can resist him," said Farrabesche.

"No, no. I know that," Véronique answered briefly, and she very kindly dismissed the grateful Farrabesche with a sign of farewell.

Farrabesche went. Most of that day Véronique spent in pacing to and fro along the terrace, in spite of the drizzling rain that fell till evening came on. She was gloomy and sad. When Véronique's brows were thus contracted, neither her mother nor Aline dared to break in on her mood; she did not see her mother talking in the dusk with M. Bonnet, who, seeing that she must be roused from this appalling dejection, sent the child to find her. Little Francis went up to his mother and took her hand, and Véronique suffered herself to be led away. At the sight of M. Bonnet she started with something almost like dismay. The curé led the way back to the terrace.

"Well, madame," he said, "what can you have been talking about with Farrabesche?"

Véronique did not wish to lie nor to answer the question; she replied to it by another—

"Was he your first victory?"

"Yes," said M. Bonnet. "If I could win him, I felt sure of Montégnac; and so it proved."

Véronique pressed M. Bonnet's hand.

"From to-day I am your penitent, M. le Curé," she said,

with tears in her voice; "to-morrow I will make you a general confession."

The last words plainly spoke of a great inward struggle and a hardly-won victory over herself. The curé led the way back to the château without a word, and stayed with her till dinner, talking over the vast improvements to be made in Montégnac.

"Agriculture is a question of time," he said. "The little that I know about it has made me to understand how much may be done by a well-spent winter. Here are the rains beginning, you see; before long the mountains will be covered with snow, and your operations will be impossible; so hurry M. Grossetête."

M. Bonnet exerted himself to talk, and drew Mme. Graslin into the conversation; gradually her thoughts were forced to take another turn, and by the time he left her she had almost recovered from the day's excitement. But even so, Mme. Sauviat saw that her daughter was so terribly agitated that she spent the night with her.

Two days later a messenger sent by M. Grossetête arrived with the following letters for Mme. Graslin:

Grossetête to Mme. Graslin.

"My dear Child:—Horses are not easily to be found, but I hope that you are satisfied with the three which I sent you. If you need draught-horses or plough-horses, they must be looked for elsewhere. It is better in any case to use oxen for ploughing and as draught animals. In all districts where they use horses on the land, they lose their capital as soon as the animal is past work, while an ox, instead of being a loss, yields a profit to the farmer.

"I approve of your enterprise in every respect, my child; you will find in it an outlet for the devouring mental energy which was turned against yourself and wearing you out. But when you asked me to find you, over and above the horses, a

man able to second you, and more particularly to enter into your views, you ask me for one of those rare birds that we rear it is true in the provinces, but which we in no case keep among us. The training of the noble animal is too lengthy and too risky a speculation for us to undertake, and, besides, we are afraid of these very clever folk—'eccentrics,' we call them.

"As a matter of fact, too, the men who are classed in the scientific category in which you are fain to find a co-operator are, as rule, so prudent and so well provided for, that I hardly liked to write to tell you how impossible it would be to come by such a prize. You ask me for a poet, or, if you prefer it, a madman; but all our madmen betake themselves to Paris. I did speak to one or two young fellows engaged on the land survey and assessments, contractors for embankments, or foremen employed on canal cuttings; but none of them thought it worth their while to entertain your proposals. Chance all at once threw in my way the very man you want, a young man whom I thought to help; for you will see by his letter that one ought not to set about doing a kindness in a happy-go-lucky fashion, and, indeed, an act of kindness requires more thinking about than anything else on this earth. You can never tell whether what seemed to you to be right at the time may not do harm by and by. By helping others we shape our own destinies; I see that now——"

As Mme. Graslin read those words, the letter dropped from her hands. For some moments she sat deep in thought.

"Oh, God," she cried, "when wilt Thou cease to smite me by every man's hand?"

Then she picked up the letters and read on—

"Gérard seems to me to have plenty of enthusiasm and a cool head; the very man for you! Paris is in a ferment just now with this leaven of new doctrine, and I shall be delighted

if the young fellow keeps out of the snares spread by ambitious spirits, who work upon the instincts of the generous youth of France. The rather torpid existence of the provinces is not altogether what I like for him, but neither do I like the idea of the excitement of the life in Paris, and the enthusiasm for renovating, which urges youngsters into the new ways. You, and you only, know my opinions; to me it seems that the world of ideas revolves on its axis much as the material world does. Here is this poor protégé of mine wanting impossibilities. No power on earth could stand before ambitions so violent, imperious, and absolute. I have a liking myself for a jog trot; I like to go slowly in politics, and have but very little taste for the social topsy-turvydom which all these lofty spirits are minded to inflict upon us. To you I confide the principles of an old and trusted supporter of the Monarchy, for you are discreet. I hold my tongue here among these good folk, who believe more and more in progress the farther they get into a mess; but for all that it hurts me to see the irreparable damage done already to our dear country.

"So I wrote and told the young man that a task worthy of him was waiting for him here. He is coming to see you; for though his letter (which I enclose) will give you a very fair idea of him, you would like to see him as well, would you not? You women can tell so much from the look of people; and, besides, you ought not to have any one, however insignificant, in your service unless you like him. If he is not the man you want, you can decline his services; but if he suits you, dear child, cure him of his flimsily-disguised ambitions, induce him to adopt the happy and peaceful life of the fields, a life in which beneficence is perpetual, where all the qualities of a great and strong nature are continually brought into play, where the products of nature are a daily source of new wonder, and a man finds worthy occupation in making a real advance and practical improvements. I do not in any way overlook the fact that great deeds come of great ideas—great theories;

but as ideas of that kind are seldom met with, I think that, for the most part, practical attainments are worth more than ideas. A man who brings a bit of land into cultivation or a tree or fruit to perfection, who makes grass grow where grass would not grow before, ranks a good deal higher than the seeker after formulas for humanity. In what has Newton's science changed the lot of the worker in the fields? Ah! my dear, I loved you before, but to-day, appreciating to the full the task which you have set before you, I love you far more. You are not forgotten here in Limoges. and every one admires your great resolution of improving Montégnac. Give us our little due, in that we have the wit to admire nobility when we see it, and do not forget that the first of your admirers is also your earliest friend.

"F. GROSSETÊTE."

Gérard to Grossetête.

"I come to you, monsieur, with sad confidences, but you have been like a father to me, when you might have been simply a patron. So to you alone, who have made me anything that I am, can I make them. I have fallen a victim to a cruel disease, a disease, moreover, not of the body; I am conscious that I am completely unfitted by my thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and by the whole bent of my mind, to do what is expected of me by the government and by society. Perhaps this will seem to you to be a piece of ingratitude, but it is simply and solely an indictment that I address to you.

"When I was twelve years old you saw the signs of a certain aptitude for the exact sciences, and a precocious ambition to succeed, in a workingman's son, and it was through you, my generous godfather, that I took my flight towards higher spheres; but for you I should be following out my original destiny, I should be a carpenter like my poor father, who did not live to rejoice in my success. And most surely, monsieur, you did me a kindness; there is no day on which I do not

bless you; and so, perhaps, it is I who am in the wrong. But whether right or wrong, I am unhappy; and does not the fact that I pour out my complaints to you set you very high? Is it not as if I made of you a supreme judge, like God? In any case, I trust to your indulgence.

"I studied the exact sciences so hard between the ages of sixteen and eighteen that I made myself ill, as you know. My whole future depended on my admission to the École Polytechnique. The work I did at that time was a disproportionate training for the intellect; I all but killed myself; I studied day and night; I exerted myself to do more than I was perhaps fit for. I was determined to pass my examinations so well that I should be sure not only of admittance into the École, but of a free education there, for I wanted to spare you the expense, and I succeeded!

"It makes me shudder now to think of that appalling conscription of brains yearly made over to the government by family ambition; a conscription which demands such severe study at a time when a lad is almost a man, and growing fast in every way, cannot but do incalculable mischief; many precious faculties which later would have developed and grown strong and powerful are extinguished by the light of the student's lamp. Nature's laws are inexorable; they are not to be thrust aside by the schemes nor at the pleasure of society; and the laws of the physical world, the laws which govern the nature without, hold good no less of human nature—every abuse must be paid for. If you must have fruit out of season, you have it from a forcing house either at the expense of the tree or of the quality of the fruit. La Quintinie killed the orange trees that Louis XIV. might have a bouquet of orange blossoms every morning throughout the year. Any heavy demand made on a still-growing intellect is a draft on its future.

"The pressing and special need of our age is the spirit of the lawgiver. Europe has so far seen no lawgiver since Jesus

Christ; and Christ, who gave us no vestige of a political code, left His work incomplete. For example, before technical schools were established, and the present means of filling them with scholars was adopted, did they call in one of the great thinkers who hold in their heads the immensity of the sum of the relations of the institution to human brain-power; who can balance the advantages and disadvantages, and study in the past the laws of the future? Was any inquiry made into the after-lives of men who, for their misfortune, knew the circle of the sciences at too early an age? Was any estimate of their rarity attempted? Was their fate ascertained? Was it discovered how they contrived to endure the continual strain of thought? How many of them died like Pascal, prematurely, worn out by science? Some, again, lived to old age; when did these begin their studies? Was it known then, is it known now as I write, what conformation of the brain is best fitted to stand the strain and to cope prematurely with knowledge? Is it so much as suspected that this is before all things a physiological question?

"Well, I think myself that the general rule is that the vegetative period of adolescence should be prolonged. There are exceptions; there are some so constituted that they are capable of this effort in youth, but the result is the shortening of life in most cases. Clearly the man of genius who can stand the precocious exercise of his faculties is bound to be an exception among exceptions. If medical testimony and social data bear me out, our way of recruiting for the technical schools in France works as much havoc among the best human specimens of each generation as La Quintinie's process among the orange trees.

"But to continue (for I will append my doubts to each series of facts), I began my work anew at the École, and with more enthusiasm than ever. I meant to leave it as successfully as I had entered it. Between the ages of nineteen and one-and-twenty I worked with all my might, and developed

my faculties by their constant exercise. Those two years set the crown on the three which came before them, when I was only preparing to do great things. And then, what pride did I not feel when I had won the privilege of choosing the career most to my mind? I might be a military or marine engineer, might go on the staff of the artillery, into the mines department, or the roads and bridges. I took your advice, and became a civil engineer.

"Yet where I triumphed, how many fell out of the ranks! You know that from year to year the government raises the standard of the École. The work grows harder and more trying from time to time. The course of preparatory study through which I went was nothing compared with the work at fever-heat in the École, to the end that every physical science—mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry, and the terminologies of each—may be packed into the heads of so many young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one. The government here in France, which in so many ways seems to aim at taking the place of the paternal authority, has in this respect no bowels—no father's pity for its children; it makes its experiments *in anima vili.* The ugly statistics of the mischief it has wrought have never been asked for; no one has troubled to inquire how many cases of brain fever there have been during the last thirty-six years; how many explosions of despair among those young lads; no one takes account of the moral destruction which decimates the victims. I lay stress on this painful aspect of the problem because it occurs by the way and before the final result; for a few weaklings the result comes soon instead of late. You know, besides, that these victims, whose minds work slowly, or who, it may be, are temporarily stupefied with overwork, are allowed to stay for three years instead of two at the École, but the way these are regarded there has no very favorable influence on their capacity. In fact, it may chance that young men, who at a later day will show that they have something in them, may

leave the École without an appointment at all, because at the final examination they do not exhibit the amount of knowledge required of them. These are 'plucked,' as they say, and Napoleon used to make sub-lieutenants of them. In these days the 'plucked' candidate represents a vast loss of capital invested by families, and a loss of time for the lad himself.

"But, after all, I myself succeeded! At the age of one-and-twenty I had gone over all the ground discovered in mathematics by men of genius, and I was impatient to distinguish myself by going farther. The desire is so natural that almost every student when he leaves the École fixes his eyes on the sun called glory in an invisible heaven. The first thought in all our minds was to be a Newton, a Laplace, or a Vauban. Such are the efforts which France requires of young men who leave the famous École Polytechnique!

"And now let us see what becomes of the men sorted and sifted with such care out of a whole generation. At one-and-twenty we dream dreams, a whole lifetime lies before us, we expect wonders. I entered the School of Roads and Bridges, and became a civil engineer. I studied construction, and with what enthusiasm! You must remember it. In 1826, when I left the school, at the age of twenty-four, I was still only a civil engineer on my promotion, with a government grant of a hundred and fifty francs a month. The worst-paid book-keeper in Paris will earn as much by the time he is eighteen, and with four hours' work in the day. By unhoped-for good luck, it may be because my studies had brought me distinction, I received an appointment as a surveyor in 1828. I was twenty-six years old. They sent me, you know where, into a sub-prefecture with a salary of two thousand five hundred francs. The money matters nothing. My lot is at any rate more brilliant than a carpenter's son has a right to expect; but what journeyman grocer put into a shop at the age of sixteen will not be fairly on the way to an independence by the time he is six-and-twenty?

"Then I found out the end to which these terrible displays of intelligence were directed, and why the gigantic efforts, required of us by the government, were made. The government sent me to count paving-stones and measure the heaps of road-material by the waysides. I must repair, keep in order, and occasionally construct runnels and culverts, maintain the ways, clean out, and occasionally open ditches. At the office I must answer all questions relating to the alignment or the planting and felling of trees. These are, in fact, the principal and often the only occupations of an ordinary surveyor. Perhaps from time to time there is some bit of leveling to be done, and that we are obliged to do ourselves, though any of the foremen with his practical experience could do the work a good deal better than we can with all our science.

"There are nearly four hundred of us altogether—ordinary surveyors and assistants—and as there are only some hundred-odd engineers-in-chief, all the subordinates cannot hope for promotion; there is practically no higher rank to absorb the engineers-in-chief, for twelve or fifteen inspectors-general or divisionaries scarcely count, and their posts are almost as much of sinecures in our corps as colonelcies in the artillery when the battery is united with it. An ordinary civil engineer, like a captain of artillery, knows all that is known about his work; he ought not to need any one to look after him except an administrative head to connect the eighty-six engineers with each other and the government, for a single engineer with two assistants is quite enough for a department. A hierarchy in such a body as ours works in this way. Energetic minds are subordinated to old effete intelligences, who think themselves bound to distort and alter (they think for the better) the drafts submitted to them; perhaps they do this simply to give some reason for their existence; and this, it seems to me, is the only influence exerted on public works in France by the General Council of Roads and Bridges.

"Let us suppose, however, that between the ages of thirty

and forty I become an engineer of the first-class, and am an engineer-in-chief by the time I am fifty. Alas! I foresee my future; it lies before my eyes. My engineer-in-chief is a man of sixty. He left the famous École with distinction, as I did; he has grown gray in two departments over such work as I am doing; he has become the most commonplace man imaginable, has fallen from the heights of attainment he once reached; nay, more than that, he is not even abreast of science. Science has made progress, and he has remained stationary; worse still, has forgotten what he once knew! The man who came to the front at the age of twenty-two with every sign of real ability has nothing of it left now but the appearance. At the very outset of his career his education was especially directed to mathematics and the exact sciences, and he took no interest in anything that was not 'in his line.' You would scarcely believe it, but the man knows absolutely nothing of other branches of learning. Mathematics have dried up his heart and brain. I cannot tell any one but you what a nullity he really is, screened by the name of the École Polytechnique. The label is impressive; and people, being prejudiced in his favor, do not dare to throw any doubt on his ability. But to you I may say that his befogged intellects have cost the department in one affair a million francs, where two hundred thousand should have been ample. I was for protesting, for opening the prefect's eyes, and whatnot; but a friend of mine, another surveyor, told me about a man in the corps who became a kind of black sheep in the eyes of the administration by doing something of this sort. 'Would you yourself be very much pleased, when you are engineer-in-chief, to have your mistakes shown up by a subordinate?' asked he. 'Your engineer-in-chief will be a divisionary inspector before very long. As soon as one of us makes some egregious blunder, the administration (which, of course, must never be in the wrong) withdraws the perpetrator from active service and makes him an inspector.' That is

how the reward due to a capable man becomes a sort of premium on stupidity.

"All France saw one disaster in the heart of Paris, the miserable collapse of the first suspension bridge which an engineer (a member of the Académie des Sciences, moreover) endeavored to construct, a collapse caused by blunders which would not have been made by the constructor of the Canal de Briare in the time of Henri IV., nor by the monk who built the Pont Royal. Him, too, the administration consoled by a summons to the Board of the General Council.

"Are the technical schools really manufactories of incompetence? The problem requires prolonged observation. If there is anything in what I say, a reform is needed, at any rate in the way in which they are carried on, for I do not venture to question the usefulness of the Écoles. Still, looking back over the past, does it appear that France has ever lacked men of great ability at need, or the talent she tries to hatch as required in these days by Monge's method? What school turned out Vauban save the great school called 'vocation?' Who was Riquet's master? When genius has raised itself above the social level, urged upwards by a vocation, it is almost always fully equipped; and in that case your man is no 'specialist,' but has something universal in his gift. I do not believe that any engineer who ever left the École could build one of the miracles of architecture which Leonardo da Vinci reared; Leonardo at once mechanician, architect, and painter, one of the inventors of hydraulic science, the indefatigable constructor of canals. They are so accustomed while yet in their teens to the bald simplicity of geometry, that by the time they leave the École they have quite lost all feeling for grace or ornament; a column to their eyes is a useless waste of material; they return to the point where art begins—on utility they take their stand, and stay there.

"But this is as nothing compared with the disease which is consuming me. I feel that a most terrible change is being

wrought in me ; I feel that my energy and faculties, after the exorbitant strain put upon them, are dwindling and growing feeble. The influence of my humdrum life is creeping over me. After such efforts as mine, I feel that I am destined to do great things, and I am confronted by the most trivial task work, such as verifying yards of road-material, inspecting highways, checking inventories of stores. I have not enough to do to fill two hours in the day.

"I watch my colleagues marry and fall out of touch with modern thought. Is my ambition really immoderate? I should like to serve my country. My country required me to give proof of no ordinary powers, and bade me become an encyclopedia of the sciences—and here I am, folding my arms in an obscure corner of a province. I am not allowed to leave the place where I am penned up, to exercise my wits by trying new and useful experiments elsewhere. A vague indefinable grudge is the certain reward awaiting any one of us who follows his own inspirations, and does more than the department requires of him. The most that such a man ought to hope for is that his overweening presumption may be passed over, his talent neglected, while his project receives decent burial in the pigeon-holes at headquarters. What will Vicat's reward be, I wonder? (Between ourselves, Vicat is the only man among us who has made any real advance in the science of construction.)

"The General Council of Roads and Bridges is partly made up of men worn out by long and sometimes honorable service, but whose remaining brain-power only exerts itself negatively; these gentlemen erase anything that they cannot understand at their age, and act as a sort of extinguisher to be put when required on audacious innovations. The Council might have been created for the express purpose of paralyzing the arm of the generous younger generation, which only asks for leave to work, and would fain serve France.

"Monstrous things happen in Paris. The future of a

province hangs on the signature of these bureaucrats. I have not time to tell you all about the intrigues which balk the best schemes; for them the best schemes are, as a matter of fact, those which open up the best prospects of money-making to the greed of speculators and companies, which knock most abuses on the head, for abuses are always stronger than the spirit of improvement in France. In five years' time my old self-will has ceased to rule. I shall see my ambitions die out in me, and my noble desire to use the faculties which my country bade me display, and then left to rust in my obscure corner.

"Taking the most favorable view possible, my outlook seems to me to be very poor. I took advantage of leave of absence to come to Paris. I want to change my career, to find scope for my energies, knowledge, and activity. I shall send in my resignation, and go to some country where men with my special training are needed, where great things may be done. If none of all this is possible, I will throw in my lot with some of these new doctrines which seem as if they must make some great change in the present order of things, by directing the workers to better purpose. For what are we but laborers without work, tools lying idle in the warehouse? We are organized as if it was a question of shaking the globe, and we are required to do—nothing.

"I am conscious that there is something great in me which is pining away and will perish; I tell you this with mathematical explicitness. But I should like to have your advice before I make a change in my condition. I look on myself as your son, and should never take any important step without consulting you, for your experience is as great as your goodness. I know, of course, that when the government has obtained its specially trained men, it can no more set its engineers to construct public monuments than it can declare war to give the army an opportunity of winning great battles and of finding out which are its great captains. But, then, as the

man has never failed to appear when circumstances called for him; as, at the moment when there is much money to be spent and great things to be done, one of these unique men of genius springs up from the crowd; and as, particularly in matters of this kind, one Vauban is enough at a time, nothing could better demonstrate the utter uselessness of the institution. In conclusion, when a picked man's mental energies have been stimulated by all this preparation, how can the government help seeing that he will make any amount of struggle before he allows himself to be effaced? Is it wise policy? What is it but a way of kindling burning ambition? Would they bid all those perfervid heads learn to calculate anything and everything but the probabilities of their own futures?

"There are, no doubt, exceptions among some six hundred young men, some firm and unbending characters, who decline to be withdrawn in this way from circulation. I know some of them; but if the story of their struggles with men and things could be told in full; if it were known how that, while full of useful projects and ideas which would put life and wealth into stagnant country districts, they meet with hindrances put in their way by the very men who (so the government led them to believe) would give them help and countenance, the strong man, the man of talent, the man whose nature is a miracle, would be thought a hundred times more unfortunate and more to be pitied than the man whose degenerate nature tamely resigns himself to the atrophy of his faculties.

"So I would prefer to direct some private commercial or industrial enterprise, and live on very little, while trying to find a solution of some one of the many unsolved problems of industry and modern life, rather than remain where I am. You will say that there is nothing to prevent me from employing my powers as it is; that in the silence of this humdrum life I might set myself to find the solution of one of those

problems which presses on humanity. Ah! monsieur, do you not understand what the influence of the provinces is; the enervating effect of a life just sufficiently busy to fill the days with all but futile work, but yet not full enough to give occupation to the powers so fully developed by such a training as ours? You will not think, my dear guardian, that I am eaten up with the ambition of money-making or consumed with a mad desire for fame. I have not learned to calculate to so little purpose that I cannot measure the emptiness of fame. The inevitable activity of life has led me not to think of marriage; and looking at my present prospects, I have not so good an opinion of existence as to give such a sorry present to another self. Although I look upon money as one of the most powerful instruments that can be put in the hands of a civilized man, money is, after all, only a means. My sole pleasure lies in the assurance that I am serving my country. To have employment for my faculties in a congenial atmosphere would be the height of enjoyment for me. Perhaps among your acquaintance in your part of the world, in the circle on which you shine, you might hear of something which requires some of the aptitude which you know that I possess; I will wait six months for an answer from you.

"These things which I am writing to you, dear patron and friend, others are thinking. I have seen a good many of my colleagues or old scholars at the École caught, as I was, in the snare of a special training; ordnance surveyors, captain-professors, captains in the artillery, doomed (as they see) to be captains for the rest of their days, bitterly regretting that they did not go into the regular army. Again and again, in fact, we have admitted to each other in confidence that we are victims of a long mystification, which we only discover when it is too late to draw back, when the mill-horse is used to the round and the sick man accustomed to his disease.

"After looking carefully into these melancholy results, I have asked myself the following questions, which I send to

you, as a man of sense, whose mature wisdom will see all that lies in them, knowing that they are fruit of thought refined by the fires of painful experience.

"What end has the government in view? To obtain the best abilities? If so, the government sets to work to obtain a directly opposite result: if it had hated talent, it could not have had better success in producing respectable mediocrities. Or does it intend to open out a career to selected intelligence? It could not well have given it a more mediocre position. There is not a man sent out by the Écoles who does not regret between fifty and sixty that he fell into the snare concealed by the offers of the government. Does it mean to secure men of genius? What really great man have the Écoles turned out since 1790? Would Cachin, the genius to whom we owe Cherbourg, have existed but for Napoleon? It was imperial despotism which singled him out; the Constitutional Administration would have stifled him. Does the Académie des Sciences number many members who have passed through the technical schools? Two or three, it may be; but the man of genius invariably appears from outside. In the particular sciences which are studied at these schools, genius obeys no laws but its own; it only develops under circumstances over which we have no control; and neither the government nor anthropology knows the conditions. Riquet, Perronet, Leonardo da Vinci, Cachin, Palladio, Brunelleschi, Michel Angelo, Bramante, Vauban, and Vicat all derived their genius from unobserved causes and preparation to which we give the name of chance—the great word for fools to fall back upon. Schools or no schools, these sublime workers have never been lacking in every age. And now, does the government, by means of organizing, obtain works of public utility better done or at a cheaper rate?

"In the first place, private enterprise does very well without professional engineers; and, in the second, state-directed works are the most expensive of all; and besides the actual

outlay, there is the cost of the maintenance of the great staff of the Roads and Bridges Department. Finally, in other countries where they have no institutions of this kind, in Germany, England, and Italy, such public works are carried out quite as well, and cost less than ours in France. Each of the three countries is well known for new and useful inventions of this kind. I know it is the fashion to speak of our Écoles as if they were the envy of Europe; but Europe has been watching us these fifteen years, and nowhere will you find the like instituted elsewhere. The English, those shrewd men of business, have better schools among their working classes, where they train practical men, who become conspicuous at once when they rise from practical work to theory. Stephenson and Macadam were not pupils in these famous institutions of ours.

"But where is the use? When young and clever engineers, men of spirit and enthusiasm, have solved at the outset of their career the problem of the maintenance of the roads of France, which requires hundreds of millions of francs every twenty-five years, which roads are in a deplorable state, it is in vain for them to publish learned treatises and memorials; everything is swallowed down by the board of direction, everything goes in and nothing comes out of a central bureau in Paris, where the old men are jealous of their juniors, and high-places are refuges for superannuated blunderers.

"This is how, with a body of educated men distributed all over France, a body which is part of the machinery of administrative government, and to whom the country looks for direction and enlightenment on the great questions within their department, it will probably happen that we in France shall still be talking about railways when other countries have finished theirs. Now, if ever France ought to demonstrate the excellence of her technical schools as an institution, should it not be in a magnificent public work of this special kind, destined to change the face of many countries, and to

double the length of human life by modifying the laws of time and space? Belgium, the United States, Germany, and England, without an École Polytechnique, will have a network of railways while our engineers are still tracing out the plans, and hideous jobbery lurking behind the projects will check their execution. You cannot lay a stone in France until half a score of scribblers in Paris have drawn up a driveling report that nobody wants. The government, therefore, gets no good of its technical schools; and as for the individual —he is tied down to a mediocre career, his life is a cruel delusion. Certain it is that with the abilities which he displayed between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five he would have gained more reputation and riches if he had been left to shift for himself than he will acquire in the career to which government condemns him. As a merchant, a scientific man, or a soldier, this picked man would have a wide field before him, his precious faculties and enthusiasm would not have been prematurely and stupidly exhausted. Then where is the advance? Assuredly the individual and the state both lose by the present system. Does not an experiment carried on for half a century show that changes are needed in the way the institution is worked? What priesthood qualifies a man for the task of selecting from a whole generation those who shall hereafter be the learned class of France? What studies should not these high-priests of destiny have made? A knowledge of mathematics is, perhaps, scarcely so necessary as physiological knowledge; and does it not seem to you that something of that clairvoyance which is the wizardry of great men might be required too? As a matter of fact, the examiners are old professors, men worthy of all honor, grown old in harness; their duty it is to discover the best memories, and there is an end of it; they can do nothing but what is required of them. Truly, their functions should be the most important ones in the state, and call for extraordinary men to fulfill them.

"Do not think, my dear friend and patron, that my censure is confined to the École through which I myself passed; it applies not only to the institution itself, but also and still more to the methods by which lads are admitted; that is to say, to the system of competitive examination. Competition is a modern invention, and essentially bad. It is bad not only in learning, but in every possible connection, in the arts, in every election made of men, projects, or things. It is unfortunate that our famous schools should not have turned out better men than any other chance assemblage of lads; but it is still more disgraceful that among the prizemen at the institute there has been no great painter, musician, architect, or sculptor; even as for the past twenty years the general elections have swept no single great statesman to the front out of all the shoals of mediocrities. My remarks have a bearing upon an error which is vitiating both politics and education in France. This cruel error is based on the following principle, which organizers have overlooked:

"'*Nothing in experience or in the nature of things can warrant the assumption that the intellectual qualities of early manhood will be those of maturity.*'

"At the present time I have been brought in contact with several distinguished men who are studying the many moral maladies which prey upon France. They recognize, as I do, the fact that secondary education forces a sort of temporary capacity in those who have neither present work nor future prospects; and that the enlightenment diffused by primary education is of no advantage to the state, because it is bereft of belief and sentiment.

"Our whole educational system calls for sweeping reform, which should be carried out under the direction of a man of profound knowledge, a man with a strong will, gifted with that legislative faculty which, possibly, is found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau alone of all moderns.

"Then, perhaps, the superfluous specialists might find em-

ployment in elementary teaching; it is badly needed by the mass of the people. We have not enough patient and devoted teachers for the training of these classes. The deplorable prevalence of crimes and misdemeanors points to a weak spot in our social system—the one-sided education which tends to weaken the fabric of society, by teaching the masses to think sufficiently to reject the religious beliefs necessary for their government, yet not enough to raise them to a conception of the theory of obedience and duty, which is the last word of transcendental philosophy. It is impossible to put a whole nation through a course of Kant; and belief and use and wont are more wholesome for the people than study and argument.

"If I had to begin again from the very beginning, I dare say I might enter a seminary and incline to the life of a simple country parson or a village schoolmaster. But now I have gone too far to be a mere elementary teacher; and, besides, a wider field of action is open to me than the schoolhouse or the parish. I cannot go the whole way with the Saint-Simonians, with whom I am tempted to throw in my lot; but with all their mistakes, they have laid a finger on many weak points in our social system, the results of our legislation, which will be palliated rather than remedied—simply putting off the evil day for France. Good-bye, dear sir; in spite of these observations of mine, rest assured of my respectful and faithful friendship, a friendship which can only grow with time.

"GRÉGOIRE GÉRARD."

Acting on old business habit, Grossetête had indorsed the letter with the rough draft of a reply, and written beneath it the sacramental word "Answered."

"MY DEAR GÉRARD:—It is the more unnecessary to enter upon any discussion of the observations contained in your letter, since that chance (to make use of the word for fools)

enables me to make you an offer which will practically extricate you from a position in which you find yourself so ill at ease. Mme. Graslin, who owns the forest of Montégnac, and a good deal of barren land below the long range of hills on which the forest lies, has a notion of turning her vast estates to some account, of exploiting the woods and bringing the stony land into cultivation. Small pay and plenty of work! A great result to be brought about by insignificant means, a district to be transformed! Abundance made to spring up on the barest rock! Is not this what you wished to do, you who would fain realize a poet's dream? From the sincere ring of your letter, I do not hesitate to ask you to come to Limoges to see me, but do not send in your resignation, my friend, only sever your connection with your corps, explain to the authorities that you are about to make a study of some problems that lie within your province, but outside the limits of your work for the government. In that way you will lose none of your privileges, and you will gain time in which to decide whether this scheme of the curé's at Montégnac, which finds favor in Mme. Graslin's eyes, is a feasible one. If these vast changes should prove to be practicable, I will lay the possible advantages before you by word of mouth, and not by letter. Believe me to be always sincerely your friend,

"GROSSETÊTE."

For all reply Mme. Graslin wrote:

"Thank you, my friend; I am waiting to see your protégé."

She showed the letter to M. Bonnet, with the remark, "Here is one more wounded creature seeking the great hospital!"

The curé read the letter and re-read it, took two or three turns upon the terrace, and handed the paper back to Mme. Graslin.

"It comes from a noble nature, the man has something in him," he said. "He writes that the schools, invented by the spirit of the Revolution, manufacture inaptitude; for my own part, I call them manufactories of unbelief; for if M. Gérard is not an atheist, he is a Protestant——"

"We will ask him," she said, struck with the curé's answer.

A fortnight later, in the month of December, M. Grossetête came to Montégnac, in spite of the cold, to introduce his protégé. Véronique and M. Bonnet awaited his arrival with impatience.

"One must love you very much, my child," said the old man, taking both of Véronique's hands, and kissing them with the old-fashioned elderly gallantry which a woman never takes amiss; "yes, one must love you very much indeed to stir out of Limoges in such weather as this; but I had made up my mind that I must come in person to make you a present of M. Grégoire Gérard. Here he is. A man after your own heart, M. Bonnet," the old banker added with an affectionate greeting to the curé.

Gérard's appearance was not very prepossessing. He was a thick-set man of middle height; his neck was lost in his shoulders, to use the common expression; he had the golden hair and red eyes of an Albino; and his eyelashes and eyebrows were almost white. Although, as often happens in these cases, his complexion was dazzlingly fair, its original beauty was destroyed by the very apparent pits and seams left by an attack of smallpox; much reading had doubtless injured his eyesight, for he wore colored spectacles. Nor when he divested himself of a thick overcoat, like a gendarme's, did his dress redeem these personal defects.

The way in which his clothes were put on and buttoned, like his untidy cravat and crumpled shirt, were distinctive signs of that personal carelessness, laid to the charge of learned men, who are all, more or less, oblivious of their sur-

roundings. His face and bearing, the great development of chest and shoulders, as compared with his thin legs, suggested a sort of physical deterioration produced by meditative habits, not uncommon in those who think much; but the stout heart and eager intelligence of the writer of the letter were plainly visible on a forehead which might have been chiseled in Carrara marble. Nature seemed to have reserved her seal of greatness for the brow, and stamped it with the steadfastness and goodness of the man. The nose was of the true Gallic type, and blunted. The firm, straight lines of the mouth indicated an absolute discretion and the sense of economy; but the whole face looked old before its time, and worn with study.

Mme. Graslin turned to speak to the inventor. "We already owe you thanks, monsieur," she said, "for being so good as to come to superintend engineering work in a country which can hold out no inducements to you save the satisfaction of knowing that you can do good."

"M. Grossetête told me enough about you on our way here, madame," he answered, "to make me feel very glad to be of any use to you. The prospect of living near to you and M. Bonnet seemed to be charming. Unless I am driven away, I look to spend my life here."

"We will try to give you no cause for changing your opinion," said Mme. Graslin.

Grossetête took her aside. "Here are the papers which the public prosecutor gave me," he said. "He seemed very much surprised that you did not apply directly to him. All that you have asked has been done promptly and with good-will. In the first place, your protégé will be reinstated in all his rights as a citizen; and, in the second, Catherine Curieux will be sent to you in three months' time."

"Where is she?" asked Véronique.

"At the Hôpital Saint-Louis," Grossetête answered. "She cannot leave Paris until she is recovered."

"Ah! is she ill, poor thing?"

"You will find all that you want to know here," said Grossetête, holding out a packet.

Véronique went back to her guests, and led the way to the magnificent dining-hall on the ground floor, walking between Grossetête and Gérard. She presided over the dinner without joining them, for she had made it a rule to take her meals alone since she had come to Montégnac. No one but Aline was in the secret, which the girl kept scrupulously until her mistress was in danger of her life.

The mayor of Montégnac, the justice of the peace, and the doctor had naturally been invited to meet the newcomer.

The doctor, a young man of seven-and-twenty, Roubaud by name, was keenly desirous of making the acquaintance of the great lady of Limousin. The curé was the better pleased to introduce him at the château since it was M. Bonnet's wish that Véronique should gather some sort of society about her, to distract her thoughts from herself, and to find some mental food. Roubaud was one of the young doctors perfectly equipped in his science, such as the École de Médecine turns out in Paris, a man who might, without doubt, have looked to a brilliant future in the vast theatre of the capital; but he had seen something of the strife of ambitions there, and took fright, conscious that he had more knowledge than capacity for scheming, more aptitude than greed; his gentle nature had inclined him to the narrower theatre of provincial life, where he hoped to win appreciation sooner than in Paris.

At Limoges Roubaud had come into collision with old-fashioned ways and patients not to be shaken in their prejudices; he had been won over by M. Bonnet, who at sight of the kindly and prepossessing face had thought that here was a worker to co-operate with him. Roubaud was short and fair-haired, and would have been rather uninteresting looking but for the gray eyes, which revealed the physiologist's sagacity and the perseverance of the student. Hitherto

Montégnac was fain to be content with an old army surgeon, who found his cellars a good deal more interesting than his patients, and who, moreover, was past the hard work of a country doctor. He happened to die just at that time. Roubaud had been in Montégnac for some eighteen months, and was very popular there; but Desplein's young disciple, one of the followers of Cabanis, was no Catholic in his beliefs. In fact, as to religion, he had lapsed into a fatal indifference, from which he was not to be roused. He was the despair of the curé, not that there was any harm whatever in him, his invariable absence from church was excused by his profession, he never talked on religious topics, he was incapable of making proselytes, no good Catholic could have behaved better than he, but he declined to occupy himself with a problem which, to his thinking, was beyond the scope of the human mind; and the curé once hearing him let fall the remark that Pantheism was the religion of all great thinkers, fancied that Roubaud inclined to the Pythagorean doctrine of the transformation of souls.

Roubaud, meeting Mme. Graslin for the first time, felt violently startled at the sight of her. His medical knowledge enabled him to divine in her face and bearing and worn features unheard-of suffering of mind and body, a preternatural strength of character, and the great faculties which can endure the strain of very different vicissitudes. He, in a manner, read her inner history, even the dark places deliberately hidden away; and more than this, he saw the disease that preyed upon the secret heart of this fair woman; for there are certain tints in human faces that indicate a poison working in the thoughts, even as the color of fruit will betray the presence of the worm at its core. From that time forward M. Roubaud felt so strongly attracted to Mme. Graslin, that he feared to be drawn beyond the limit where friendship ends. There was an eloquence, which men always understand, in Véronique's brows and attitude, and, above all, in her eyes; it was suffi-

ciently unmistakable that she was dead to love, even as other women with a like eloquence proclaim the contrary. The doctor became her chivalrous worshiper on the spot. He exchanged a swift glance with the curé, and M. Bonnet said within himself—

"Here is the flash from heaven that will change this poor unbeliever? Mme. Graslin will have more eloquence than I."

The mayor, an old countryman, overawed by the splendor of the dining-room, and surprised to be asked to meet one of the richest men in the department, had put on his best clothes for the occasion; he felt somewhat uneasy in them, and scarcely more at ease with his company. Mme. Graslin, too, in her mourning dress was an awe-inspiring figure; the worthy mayor was dumb. He had once been a farmer at Saint-Léonard, had bought the one habitable house in the township, and cultivated the land that belonged to it himself. He could read and write, but only managed to acquit himself in his official capacity with the help of the justice's clerk, who prepared his work for him; so he ardently desired the advent of a notary, meaning to lay the burden of his public duties on official shoulders when that day should come; but Montégnac was so poverty-stricken that a resident notary was hardly needed, and the notaries of the principal place in the arrondissement found clients in Montégnac.

The justice of the peace, Clousier by name, was a retired barrister from Limoges. Briefs had grown scarce with the learned gentleman, owing to a tendency on his part to put in practice the noble maxim that a barrister is the first judge of the client and the case. About the year 1809 he obtained this appointment; the salary was a meagre pittance, but enough to live upon. In this way he had reached the most honorable but the most complete penury. Twenty-two years of residence in the poor commune had transformed the worthy lawyer into a countryman, scarcely to be distinguished from

any of the small farmers round about, whom he resembled even in the cut of his coat. But beneath Clousier's homely exterior dwelt a clairvoyant spirit, a philosophical politician whose Gallio's attitude was due to his perfect knowledge of human nature and of men's motives. For a long time he had baffled M. Bonnet's perspicacity. The man who, in a higher sphere, might have played the active part of a L'Hôpital, incapable of intrigue, like all deep thinkers, had come at last to lead the contemplative life of a hermit of olden time. Rich without doubt with all the gains of privation, he was swayed by no personal considerations; he knew the law, and judged impartially. His life, reduced to the barest necessaries, was regular and pure. The peasants loved and respected M. Clousier for the fatherly disinterestedness with which he settled their disputes and gave advice in even their smallest difficulties. For the last two years "Old Clousier," as every one called him in Montégnac, had had one of his nephews to help him, a rather intelligent young man, who, at a later day, contributed not a little to the prosperity of the commune.

The most striking thing about the old man's face was the broad vast forehead. Two bushy masses of white hair stood out on either side of it. A florid complexion and magisterial portliness might give the impression that (in spite of his real sobriety) he was as earnest a disciple of Bacchus as of Troplong and Toullier. His scarcely audible voice indicated asthmatic oppression of breathing; possibly the dry air of Montégnac had counted for something in his decision when he made up his mind to accept the post. His little house had been fitted up for him by the well-to-do sabot-maker, his landlord.

Clousier had already seen Véronique at the church, and had formed his own opinion of her, which opinion he kept to himself; he had not even spoken of her to M. Bonnet, with whom he was beginning to feel at home. For the first time in

his life, the justice of the peace found himself in the company of persons able to understand him.

When the six guests had taken their places round a handsomely-appointed table (for Véronique had brought all her furniture with her to Montégnac), there was a brief embarrassed pause. The doctor, the mayor, and the justice were none of them acquainted with Grossetête or with Gérard. But during the first course the banker's geniality thawed the ice, Mme. Graslin graciously encouraged M. Roubaud and drew out Gérard; under her influence all these different natures, full of exquisite qualities, recognized their kinship. It was not long before each felt himself to be in a congenial atmosphere. So that by the time dessert was put on the table, and the crystal and the gilded edges of the porcelain sparkled, when choice wines were set in circulation, handed to the guests by Aline, Maurice Champion, and Grossetête's man, the conversation had become more confidential, so that the four noble natures thus brought together by chance felt free to speak their real minds on the great subjects that men love to discuss in good faith.

"Your leave of absence coincided with the Revolution of July," Grossetête said, looking at Gérard in a way that asked his opinion.

"Yes," answered the engineer. "I was in Paris during the three famous days; I saw it all; I drew some disheartening conclusions."

"What were they?" M. Bonnet asked quickly.

"There is no patriotism left except under the workman's shirt," answered Gérard. "Therein lies the ruin of France. The Revolution of July is the defeat of men who are notable for birth, fortune, and talent, and a defeat in which they acquiesce. The enthusiastic zeal of the masses has gained a victory over the rich and intelligent classes, to whom zeal and enthusiasm are antipathetic."

"To judge by last year's events," added M. Clousier, "the

change is a direct encouragement to the evil which is devouring us—to individualism. In fifty years' time every generous question will be replaced by a '*What is that to me?*' the watchword of independent opinion descended from the spiritual heights where Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, and Knox inaugurated it, till even in political economy each has a right to his own opinion. *Each for himself! Let each man mind his own business!*—these two terrible phrases, together with *What is that to me?* complete a trinity of doctrine for the bourgeoisie and the peasant proprietors. This egoism is the result of defects in our civil legislation, somewhat too hastily accomplished in the first instance, and now confirmed by the terrible consecration of the Revolution of July."

The justice relapsed into his wonted silence again with this speech, which gave the guests plenty to think over. Then M. Bonnet ventured yet further, encouraged by Clousier's remarks, and by a glance exchanged between Gérard and Grossetête.

"Good King Charles X.," said he, "has just failed in the most provident and salutary enterprise that king ever undertook for the happiness of a nation intrusted to him. The Church should be proud of the share she had in his councils. But it was the heart and brain of the upper classes which failed him, as they had failed before over the great question of the law with regard to the succession of the eldest son, the eternal honor of the one bold statesman of the Restoration—the Comte de Peyronnet. To reconstruct the nation on the basis of the family, to deprive the press of its power to do harm without restricting its usefulness, to confine the elective chamber to the functions for which it was really intended, to give back to religion its influence over the people—such were the four cardinal points of the domestic policy of the House of Bourbon. Well, in twenty years' time all France will see the necessity of that great and salutary course. King Charles X. was, moreover, more insecure in the position which he decided

to quit than in the position in which his paternal authority came to an end. The future history of our fair country, when everything shall be periodically called in question, when ceaseless discussion shall take the place of action, when the press shall become the sovereign power and the tool of the basest ambitions, will prove the wisdom of the king who has just taken with him the real principles of government. History will render to him his due for the courage with which he withstood his best friends, when once he had probed the wound, seen its extent, and the pressing necessity for the treatment, which has not been continued by those for whom he threw himself into the breach."

"Well, M. le Curé, you go straight to the point without the slightest disguise," cried M. Gérard, "but I do not say nay. When Napoleon made his Russian campaign he was forty years ahead of his age; he was misunderstood. Russia and England, in 1830, can explain the campaign of 1812. Charles X. was in the same unfortunate position; twenty-five years hence his ordinances may perhaps become law."

"France, too eloquent a country not to babble, too vainglorious to recognize real ability, in spite of the sublime good sense of her language and the mass of her people, is the very last country in which to introduce the system of two deliberating chambers," the justice of the peace remarked. "At any rate, not without the admirable safeguards against these elements in the national character, devised by Napoleon's experience. The representative system may work in a country like England, where its action is circumscribed by the nature of the soil; but the right of primogeniture, as applied to real estate, is a necessary part of it; without this factor, the representative system becomes sheer nonsense. England owes its existence to the quasi-feudal law which transmitted the house and lands to the oldest son. Russia is firmly seated on the feudal system of autocracy. For these reasons, both nations at the present day are making alarming progress. Austria

could not have resisted our invasions as she did, nor declared a second war against Napoleon, had it not been for the law of primogeniture, which preserves the strength of the family and maintains production on the large scale necessary to the state. The House of Bourbon, conscious that liberalism had relegated France to the rank of a third-rate power in Europe, determined to regain and keep their place, and the country shook off the Bourbons when they had all but saved the country. I do not know how deep the present state of things will sink us."

"If there should be a war," cried Grossetête, "France will be without horses, as Napoleon was in 1813, when he was reduced to the resources of France alone, and could not make use of the victories of Lutzen and Bautzen, and was crushed at Leipsic! If peace continues, the evil will grow worse: twenty years hence the number of horned cattle and horses in France will be diminished by one-half."

"M. Grossetête is right," said Gérard. "So the work which you have decided to attempt here is a service done to your country, madame," he added, turning to Véronique.

"Yes," said the justice of the peace, "because Mme. Graslin has but one son. But will this chance in the succession repeat itself? For a certain time, let us hope, the great and magnificent scheme of cultivation which you are to carry into effect will be in the hands of one owner, and therefore will continue to provide grazing land for horses and cattle. But, in spite of all, a day will come when forest and field will be either divided up or sold in lots. Division and subdivision will follow, until the six thousand acres of plain will count ten or twelve hundred owners; and when that time comes there will be no more horses nor prize cattle."

"Oh! when that time comes——" said the mayor.

"There is a *What is that to me?*" cried M. Grossetête, "and M. Clousier sounded the signal for it; he is caught in the act. But, monsieur," the banker went on gravely, addressing the bewildered mayor, "the time *has* come!

Round about Paris for a ten-league radius, the land is divided up into little patches that will hardly pasture sufficient milch cows. The commune of Argenteuil numbers thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-five plots of land, a good many of them bringing in less than fifteen centimes a year! If it were not for high farming and manure from Paris, which give heavy crops of fodder of different kinds, I do not know how cow-keepers and dairymen would manage. As it is, the animals are peculiarly subject to inflammatory diseases consequent on the heating diet and confinement to cow-sheds. They wear out their cows round about Paris just as they wear out horses in the streets. Then market-gardens, orchards, nurseries, and vineyards pay so much better than pasture, that the grazing land is gradually diminishing. A few years more, and milk will be sent in by express to Paris, like saltfish, and what is going on round Paris is happening also about all large towns. The evils of the minute subdivision of landed property are extending round a hundred French cities; some day all France will be eaten up by them.

"In 1800, according to Chaptal, there were about five million acres of vineyard; exact statistics would show fully five times as much to-day. When Normandy is split up into an infinitude of small holdings, by our system of inheritance fifty per cent. of the horse and cattle trade there will fall off; still Normandy will have the monopoly of the Paris milk trade, for luckily the climate will not permit vine culture. Another curious thing to notice is the steady rise in the price of butcher meat. In 1814, prices ranged from seven to eleven sous per pound; in 1850, twenty years hence, Paris will pay twenty sous, unless some genius is raised up to carry out the theories of Charles X."

"You have pointed out the greatest evil in France," said the justice of the peace. "The cause of it lies in the chapter *Des Successions* in the Civil Code, wherein the equal division of real estate among the children of the family is required.

That is the pestle which is constantly grinding the country to powder, gives to every one but a life-interest in property which cannot remain as it is after his death. A continuous process of decomposition (for the reverse process is never set up) will end by ruining France. The French Revolution generated a deadly virus, and the Days of July have set the poison working afresh; this dangerous germ of disease is the acquisition of land by peasants. If the chapter *Des Successions* is the origin of the evil, it is through the peasant that it reaches its worst phase. The peasant never relinquishes the land he has won. Let a bit of land once get between the ogre's ever-hungry jaws, he divides and subdivides it until there are but strips of three furrows left. Nay, even there he does not stop! he will divide the three furrows in lengths. The commune of Argenteuil, which M. Grossetête instanced just now, is a case in point. The preposterous value which the peasants set on the smallest scraps of land makes it quite impossible to reconstruct an estate. The law and procedure are made a dead letter at once by this division, and ownership is reduced to absurdity. But it is a comparatively trifling matter that the minute subdivision of the law should paralyze the treasury and the law by making it impossible to carry out its wisest regulations. There are far greater evils than even these. There are actually landlords of property bringing in fifteen and twenty centimes per annum!

"Monsieur has just said something about the falling off of cattle and horses," Clousier continued, looking at Grossetête; "the system of inheritance counts for much in that matter. The peasant proprietor keeps cows, and cows only, because milk enters into his diet; he sells the calves; he even sells butter. He has no mind to raise oxen, still less to breed horses; he has only just sufficient fodder for a year's consumption; and when a dry spring comes and hay is scarce, he is forced to take his cow to market; he cannot afford to keep her. If it should fall out so unluckily that two bad hay

harvests came in succession, you would see some strange fluctuations in the price of beef in Paris, and, above all, in veal, when the third year came."

"And how would they do for patriotic banquets then?" asked the doctor, smiling.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mme. Graslin, glancing at Roubaud, "so even here, as everywhere else, politics must be served up with journalistic items."

"In this bad business the bourgeoisie play the part of American pioneers," continued Clousier. "They buy up the large estates, too large for the peasant to meddle with, and divide them. After the bulk has been cut up and triturated, a forced sale or an ordinary sale in lots hands it over sooner or later to the peasant. Everything nowadays is reduced to figures, and I know of none more eloquent than these: France possesses forty-nine million *hectares* of land, for the sake of convenience, let us say forty, deducting something for roads and high-roads, dunes, canals, land out of cultivation, and wastes like the plain of Montégnac, which need capital. Now, out of forty million *hectares* to a population of thirty-two millions, there are a hundred and twenty-five million parcels of land, according to the land-tax returns. I have not taken the fractions into account. So we have outrun the agrarian law, and yet neither poverty nor discord are at an end. Then the next thing will be that those who are turning the land into crumbs and diminishing the output of produce will find mouthpieces for the cry that true social justice only permits the usufruct of the land to each. They will say that ownership in perpetuity is robbery. The Saint-Simonians have begun already."

"There spoke the magistrate," said Grossetête, "and this is what the banker adds to his bold reflections. When landed property became tenable by peasants and small shopkeepers, a great wrong was done to France, though the government does not so much as suspect it. Suppose that we set down the

whole mass of the peasants at three million families, after deducting the paupers. Those families all belong to the wage-earning class. Their wages are paid in money instead of in kind——"

"There is another immense blunder in our legislation," Clousier cried, breaking in on the banker. "In 1790 it might still have been possible to pass a law empowering employers to pay wages in kind, but now—to introduce such a measure would be to risk a revolution."

"In this way," Grossetête continued, "the money of the country passes into the pockets of the proletariat. Now, the peasant has one passion, one desire, one determination, one aim in life—to die a landed proprietor. This desire, as M. Clousier has very clearly shown, is one result of the Revolution—a direct consequence of the sale of the national lands. Only those who have no idea of the state of things in country districts could refuse to admit that each of those three million families annually buries fifty francs as a regular thing, and in this way a hundred and fifty millions of francs are withdrawn from circulation every year. The science of political economy has reduced to an axiom the statement that a five-franc piece, if it passes through a hundred hands in the course of a day, does duty for five hundred francs. Now, it is certain for some of us old observers of the state of things in country districts that the peasant fixes his eyes on a bit of land, keeps ready to pounce upon it, and bides his time—meanwhile he never invests his capital. The intervals in the peasant's land-purchases should, therefore, be reckoned at periods of seven years. For seven years, consequently, a capital of eleven hundred million francs is lying idle in the peasants' hands; and as the lower middle classes do the same thing to quite the same extent, and behave in the same way with regard to land on too large a scale for the peasant to nibble at, in forty-two years France loses the interest on two milliards of francs at least—that is to say, on something like a hundred millions

every seven years, or six hundred millions in forty-two years. But this is not the only loss. France has failed to create the worth of six hundred millions in agricultural or industrial produce. And this failure to produce may be taken as a loss of twelve hundred million francs; for if the market price of a product were not double the actual cost of production, commerce would be at a standstill. The proletariat deprives itself of six hundred million francs of wages. These six hundred millions of initial loss that represent, for an economist, twelve hundred millions of loss of benefit derived from circulation, explain how it is that our commerce, shipping trade, and agriculture compare so badly with the state of things in England. In spite of the differences between the two countries (a good two-thirds of them, moreover, in our favor), England could mount our cavalry twice over, and every one there eats meat. But then, under the English system of land-tenure, it is almost impossible for the working classes to buy land, and so all the money is kept in constant circulation. So besides the evils of the comminution of the land, and the decay of the trade in cattle, horses, and sheep, the chapter *Des Successions* costs us a further loss of six hundred million francs of interest on the capital buried by the peasants and trades-people, or twelve hundred million francs' worth of produce (at the least)—that is to say, a total loss of three milliards of francs withdrawn from circulation every half-century."

"The moral effect is worse than the material effect!" cried the curé. "We are turning the peasantry into pauper landowners, and half educating the lower middle classes. It will not be long before the canker of *Each for himself! Let each mind his own business!* which did its work last July among the upper classes, will spread to the middle classes. A proletariat of hardened materialists, knowing no God but envy, no zeal but the despair of hunger, with no faith nor belief left, will come to the front, and trample the heart of the

country under foot. The foreigner, waxing great under a monarchical government, will find us under the shadow of royalty without the reality of a king, without law under the cover of legality, owners of property but not proprietors, with the right of election but without a government, listless holders of free and independent opinions, equal but equally unfortunate. Let us hope that between now and then God will raise up in France the man for the time, one of those elect who breathe a new spirit into a nation, a man who, whether he is a Sylla or a Marius, whether he comes from the heights or rises from the depths, will reconstruct society."

"The first thing to do will be to send him to the assizes or to the police court," said Gérard. "The judgment of Socrates or of Christ will be given to him, here in 1831, as of old in Attica and at Jerusalem. To-day, as of old, jealous mediocrity allows the thinker to starve. If the great political physicians who have studied the diseases of France, and are opposed to the spirit of the age, should resist to the starvation-point, we ridicule them, and treat them as visionaries. Here in France we revolt against the sovereign thinker, the great man of the future, just as we rise in revolt against the political sovereign."

"But in those old times the Sophists had a very limited audience," cried the justice of the peace; "while to-day, through the medium of the periodical press, they can lead a whole nation astray; and the press which pleads for common-sense finds no echo!"

The mayor looked at M. Clousier with intense astonishment. Mme. Graslin, delighted to find a simple justice of the peace interested in such grave problems, turned to her neighbor, M. Roubaud, with, "Do you know M. Clousier?"

"Not till to-day! Madame, you are working miracles," he added in her ear. "And yet look at his forehead, how finely shaped it is! It is like the classical or traditional brow that sculptors gave to Lycurgus and the wise men of

Greece, is it not? Clearly there was an impolitic side to the Revolution of July," he added aloud, after going through Grossetête's reasonings. He had been a medical student, and perhaps would have lent a hand at a barricade.

"'Twas trebly impolitic," said Clousier. "We have concluded the case for law and finance, now for the government. The royal power, weakened by the dogma of the national sovereignty, in virtue of which the election was made on the 9th of August, 1830, will strive to overcome its rival, a principle which gives the people the right of changing a dynasty every time they fail to apprehend the intentions of their king; so there is a domestic struggle before us which will check progress in France for a long while yet."

"England has wisely steered clear of all these sunken rocks," said Gérard. "I have been in England. I admire the hive which sends swarms over the globe to settle and civilize. In England political debate is a comedy intended to satisfy the people and to hide the action of authority which moves untrammeled in its lofty sphere; election there is not, as in France, the referring of a question to a stupid bourgeoisie. If the land were divided up, England would cease to exist at once. The great landowners and the lords control the machinery of government. They have a navy which takes possession of whole quarters of the globe (and under the very eyes of Europe) to fulfill the exigencies of their trade, and form colonies for the discontented and unsatisfactory. Instead of waging war on men of ability, annihilating and underrating them, the English aristocracy continually seeks them out, rewards and assimilates them. The English are prompt to act in all that concerns the government, and in the choice of men and material, while with us action of any kind is slow; and yet they are slow, and we impatient. Capital with them is adventurous, and always moving; with us it is shy and suspicious. Here is corroboration of M. Grossetête's statements about the loss to industry

of the peasants' capital; I can sketch the difference in a few words. English capital, which is constantly circulating, has created ten milliards of wealth in the shape of expanded manufactures and joint-stock companies paying dividends; while here in France, though we have more capital, it has not yielded one-tenth part of the profit."

"It is all the more extraordinary," said Roubaud, "since they are lymphatic, and we are generally either sanguine or nervous."

"Here is a great problem for you to study, monsieur," said Clousier. "Given a national temperament, to find the institutions best adapted to counteract it. Truly, Cromwell was a great legislator. He, one man, made England what she is by promulgating the *Act of Navigation*, which made the English the enemy of all other nations, and infused into them a fierce pride, that has served them as a lever. But in spite of their garrison at Malta, as soon as France and Russia fully understand the part to be played in politics by the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, the discovery of a new route to Asia by way of Egypt or the Euphrates valley will be a death-blow to England, just as the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope was the ruin of Venice."

"And nothing of God in all this!" cried the curé. "M. Clousier and M. Roubaud are quite indifferent in matters of religion—— and you, monsieur?" he asked questioningly, turning to Gérard.

"A Protestant," said Grossetête.

"You guessed rightly!" exclaimed Véronique, with a glance at the curé as she offered her hand to Clousier to return to her apartments.

All prejudices excited by M. Gérard's appearance quickly vanished, and the three notables of Montégnac congratulated themselves on such an acquisition.

"Unluckily," said M. Bonnet, "there is a cause for antagonism between Russia and the Catholic countries on the

shores of the Mediterranean; a schism of little real importance divides the Greek Church from the Latin, to the great misfortune of humanity."

"Each preaches for his saint," said Mme. Graslin, smiling. "M. Grossetête thinks of lost milliards; M. Clousier of law in confusion; the doctor sees in legislation a question of temperaments; M. le Curé sees in religion an obstacle in the way of a good understanding between France and Russia."

"Please add, madame," said Gérard, "that in the sequestration of capital by the peasant and small tradesman, I see the delay of the completion of railways in France——"

"Then what would you have?" asked she.

"Oh! The admirable Councilors of State who devised laws in the time of the Emperor and the *Corps législatif*, when those who had brains as well as those who had property had a voice in the election, a body whose sole function it was to oppose unwise laws or capricious wars. The present Chamber of Deputies is like to end, as you will see, by becoming the governing body, and legalized anarchy it will be."

"Great heavens!" cried the curé in an excess of lofty patriotism, "how is it that minds so enlightened"—he indicated Clousier, Roubaud, and Gérard—"see the evil, and point out the remedy, and do not begin by applying it to themselves? All of you represent the classes attacked; all of you recognize the necessity of passive obedience on the part of the great masses in the state, an obedience like that of the soldier in time of war; all of you desire the unity of authority, and wish that it shall never be called in question. But that consolidation to which England has attained through the development of pride and material interests (which are a sort of belief) can only be attained here by sentiments induced by catholicism, and you are not Catholics! I the priest drop my character, and reason with rationalists.

"How can you expect the masses to become religious and to obey if they see irreligion and relaxed discipline around

them? A people united by any faith will easily get the better of men without belief. The law of the interest of all, which underlies patriotism, is at once annulled by the law of individual interest, which authorizes and implants selfishness. Nothing is solid and durable but that which is natural, and the natural basis of politics is the family. The family should be the basis of all institutions. A universal effect denotes a coextensive cause. These things that you notice proceed from the social principle itself, which has no force, because it is based on independent opinion, and the right of private judgment is the forerunner of individualism. There is less wisdom in looking for the blessing of security from the intelligence and capacity of the majority than in depending upon the intelligence of institutions and the capacity of one single man for the blessing of security. It is easier to find wisdom in one man than in a whole nation. The peoples have but a blind heart to guide them; they feel, but they do not see. A government must see, and must not be swayed by sentiments. There is therefore an evident contradiction between the first impulses of the masses and the action of authority which must direct their energy and give it unity. To find a great prince is a great chance (to use your language), but to trust your destinies to any assembly of men, even if they are honest, is madness.

"France is mad at this moment! Alas! you are as thoroughly convinced of this as I. If all men who really believe what they say, as you do, would set the example in their own circle; if every intelligent thinker would set his hand to raising once more the altars of the great spiritual republic, of the one Church which has directed humanity, we might see once more in France the miracles wrought there by our fathers."

"What would you have, M. le Curé?" said Gérard, "if one must speak to you as in the confessional—I look on faith as a lie which you consciously tell yourself, on hope as a lie about

the future, and on this charity of yours as a child's trick; one is a good boy, for the sake of the jam."

"And yet, monsieur, when hope rocks us we sleep well," said Mme. Graslin.

Roubaud, who was about to speak, supported by a glance from Grossetête and the curé, stopped short, however, at the words.

"Is it any fault of ours," said Clousier, "if Jesus Christ had not time to formulate a system of government in accordance with His teaching, as Moses did and Confucius—the two greatest legislators whom the world has seen, for the Jews and the Chinese still maintain their national existence, though the first are scattered all over the earth, and the second an isolated people?"

"Ah! you are giving me a task indeed," said the curé candidly, "but I shall triumph, I shall convert all of you. You are much nearer the faith than you think. Truth lurks beneath the lie; come forward but a step, and you return!"

And with this cry from the curé the conversation took a fresh direction.

The next morning before M. Grossetête went, he promised to take an active share in Véronique's schemes so soon as they should be judged practicable. Mme. Graslin and Gérard rode beside his traveling carriage as far as the point where the cross-road joined the high-road from Bordeaux to Lyons. Gérard was so eager to see the place, and Véronique so anxious to show it to him, that this ride had been planned overnight. After they took leave of the kind old man, they galloped down into the great plain and skirted the hillsides that lay between the château and the Living Rock. The surveyor recognized the rock embankment which Farrabesche had pointed out; it stood up like the lowest course of masonry under the foundations of the hills, in such a manner that when the bed of this indestructible canal of nature's making should be cleared out,

and the water-courses regulated so as not to choke it, irrigation would actually be facilitated by that long channel which lay about ten feet above the surface of the plain. The first thing to be done was to estimate the volume of water in the Gabou, and to make certain that the sides of the valley could hold it; no decision could be made till this was known.

Véronique gave a horse to Farrabesche, who was to accompany Gérard and acquaint him with the least details which he himself had observed. After some days of consideration Gérard thought the base of either parallel chains of hill solid enough (albeit of different material) to hold the water.

In the January of the following year, a wet season, Gérard calculated the probable amount of water discharged by the Gabou, and found that, when the three water-courses had been diverted into the torrent, the total amount would be sufficient to water an area three times as great as the plain of Montégnac. The dams across the Gabou, the masonry and engineering works needed to bring the water-supply of the three little valleys into the plain, should not cost more than sixty thousand francs; for the surveyor discovered a quantity of chalky deposit on the common, so that lime would be cheap, and the forest being so near at hand, stone and timber would cost nothing even for transport. All the preparations could be made before the Gabou ran dry, so that when the important work should be begun it should quickly be finished. But the plain was another matter. Gérard considered that there the first preparation would cost at least two hundred thousand francs, sowing and planting apart.

The plain was to be divided into four squares of two hundred and fifty acres each. There was no question of breaking up the waste; the first thing to do was to remove the largest flints. Navvies would be employed to dig a great number of trenches and to line the channels with stone to keep the water in, for the water must be made to flow or to stand as required. All this work called for active, devoted, and painstaking

workers. Chance so ordered it that the plain was a straightforward piece of work, a level stretch, and the water with a ten-foot fall could be distributed at will. There was nothing to prevent the finest results in farming the land; here there might be just such a splendid green carpet as in North Italy, a source of wealth and of pride to Lombardy. Gérard sent to his late district for an old and experienced foreman, Fresquin by name.

Mme. Graslin, therefore, wrote to ask Grossetête to negotiate for her a loan of two hundred and fifty thousand francs on the security of her government stock; the interest of six years, Gérard calculated, should pay off the debt, capital and interest. The loan was concluded in the course of the month of March; and by that time Gérard, with Fresquin's assistance, had finished all the preliminary operations, leveling, boring, observations, and estimates. The news of the great scheme had spread through the country and roused the poor people; and the indefatigable Farrabesche, Colorat, Clousier, Roubaud, and the Mayor of Montégnac, all those, in fact, who were interested in the enterprise for its own sake or for Mme. Graslin's, chose the workers or gave the names of the poor who deserved to be employed.

Gérard bought partly for M. Grossetête, partly on his own account, some thousand acres of land on the other side of the road through Montégnac. Fresquin, his foreman, also took five hundred acres, and sent for his wife and children.

In the early days of April, 1833, M. Grossetête came to Montégnac to see the land purchased for him by Gérard; but the principal motive of his journey was the arrival of Catherine Curieux. She had come by the diligence from Paris to Limoges, and Mme. Graslin was expecting her. Grossetête found Mme. Graslin about to start for the church. M. Bonnet was to say a mass to ask the blessing of heaven on the work about to begin. All the men, women, and children were present.

M. Grossetête brought forward a woman of thirty or thereabouts, who looked weak and out of health. "Here is your protégé," he said, addressing Véronique.

"Are you Catherine Curieux?" Mme. Graslin asked.

"Yes, madame."

For a moment Véronique looked at her; Catherine was rather tall, shapely, and pale; the exceeding sweetness of her features was not belied by the beautiful soft gray eyes. In the shape of her face and the outlines of her forehead there was a nobleness, a sort of grave and simple majesty, sometimes seen in very young girls' faces in the country, a kind of flower of beauty, which field-work, and the constant wear of household cares, and sunburn, and neglect of appearance, wither with alarming rapidity. From her attitude as she stood it was easy to discern that she would move with the ease of a daughter of the fields and something of an added grace, unconsciously learned in Paris. If Catherine had never left the Corrèze, she would no doubt have been by this time a wrinkled and withered woman, the bright tints in her face would have grown hard; but Paris, which had toned down the high color, had preserved her beauty; and ill-health, weariness, and sorrow had given to her the mysterious gifts of melancholy and of that inner life of thought denied to poor toilers in the field who lead an almost animal existence. Her dress likewise marked a distinction between her and the peasants; for it abundantly displayed the Parisian taste which even the least coquettish women are so quick to acquire. Catherine Curieux, not knowing what might await her, and unable to judge the lady in whose presence she stood, seemed somewhat embarrassed.

"Do you still love Farrabesche?" asked Mme. Graslin, when Grossetête left the two women together for a moment.

"Yes, madame," she answered, flushing red.

"But if you sent him a thousand francs while he was in prison, why did you not come to him when he came out?

Do you feel any repugnance for him? Speak to me as you would to your own mother. Were you afraid that he had gone utterly to the bad? that he cared for you no longer?"

"No, madame; but I can neither read nor write. I was living with a very exacting old lady; she fell ill; we sat up with her of a night, and I had to nurse her. I knew the time was coming near when Jacques would be out of prison, but I could not leave Paris until the lady died. She left me nothing, after all my devotion to her and her interests. I had made myself ill with sitting up with her and the hard work of nursing, and I wanted to get well again before I came back. I spent all my savings, and then I made up my mind to go into the Hôpital Saint-Louis, and have just been discharged as cured."

Mme. Graslin was touched by an explanation so simple.

"Well, but, my dear," she said, "tell me why you left your people so suddenly; what made you leave your child? why did you not send them news of you, or get some one to write——"

For all answer, Catherine wept.

"Madame," she said at last, reassured by the pressure of Véronique's hand, "I daresay I was wrong, but it was more than I could do to stop in the place. It was not that I felt I had done wrong; it was the rest of them; I was afraid of their gossip and talk. So long as Jacques was here in danger, he could not do without me; but when he was gone, I felt as if I could not stop. There was I, a girl with a child and no husband! The lowest creature would have been better than I. If I had heard them say the least word about Benjamin or his father, I do not know what I should have done. I should have killed myself perhaps or gone out of my mind. My own father or mother might have said something hasty in a moment of anger. Meek as I am, I am too irritable to bear hasty words or insult. I have been well punished; I could not see my child, and never a day passed but I thought

of him! I wanted to be forgotten, and forgotten I am. Nobody has given me a thought. They thought I was dead, and yet many and many a time I felt I could like to leave everything to have one day here and see my little boy——"

"Your little boy—see, Catherine, here he is!" replied Madame Graslin.

Catherine looked up and saw Benjamin, and something like a feverish shiver ran through her.

"Benjamin," said Mme. Graslin, "come and kiss your mother."

"My mother?" cried Benjamin in amazement. He flung his arms round Catherine's neck, and she clasped him to her with wild energy. But the boy escaped, and ran away crying, "I will find *him!*"

Mme. Graslin, seeing that Catherine's strength was failing, made her sit down; and as she did so her eyes met M. Bonnet's look, her color rose, for in that keen glance her confessor read her heart. She spoke tremulously.

"I hope, M. le Curé," she said, "that you will marry Catherine and Farrabesche at once. Do you not remember M. Bonnet, my child? He will tell you that Farrabesche has behaved himself like an honest man since he came back. Every one in the countryside respects him; if there is a place in the world where you may live happily with the good opinion of every one about you, it is here in Montégnac. With God's will, you will make your fortune here, for you shall be my tenants. Farrabesche has all his citizen's rights again."

"This is all true, my daughter," said the curé.

As he spoke, Farrabesche came in, led by his eager son. Face to face with Catherine in Mme. Graslin's presence, his face grew white, and he was mute. He saw how active the kindness of the one had been for him, and guessed all that the other had suffered in her enforced absence. Véronique turned to go with M. Bonnet, and the curé for his part wished to take Véronique aside. As soon as they were out of hearing,

Véronique's confessor looked full at her and saw her color rise; she lowered her eyes like a guilty creature.

"You are degrading charity," he said severely.

"And how?" she asked, raising her head.

"Charity," said M. Bonnet, "is a passion as far greater than love, as humanity, madame, is greater than one human creature. All this is not the spontaneous work of disinterested virtue. You are falling from the grandeur of the service of man to the service of a single creature. In your kindness to Catherine and Farrabesche there is an alloy of memories and after-thoughts which spoils it in the sight of God. Pluck out the rest of the dart of the spirit of evil from your heart. Do not spoil the value of your good deeds in this way. Will you ever attain at last to that holy ignorance of the good that you do, which is the supreme grace of man's actions?"

Mme. Graslin turned away to dry her eyes. Her tears told the curé that his words had reached and probed some unhealed wound in her heart. Farrabesche, Catherine, and Benjamin came to thank their benefactress, but she made a sign to them to go away and leave her with M. Bonnet.

"You see how I have hurt them," she said, bidding him see their disappointed faces. And the tender-hearted curé beckoned to them to come back.

"You must be completely happy," she said. "Here is the patent which gives you back all your rights as a citizen, and exempts you from the old humiliating formalities," she added, holding out to Farrabesche a paper which she had kept. Farrabesche kissed Véronique's hand. There was an expression of submissive affection and quiet devotion in his eyes, the devotion which nothing could change, the fidelity of a dog for his master.

"If Jacques has suffered much, madame, I hope that it will be possible for me to make up to him in happiness for the trouble he has been through," said Catherine; "for whatever he may have done, he is not bad."

Mme. Graslin turned away her head. The sight of their happiness seemed to crush her. M. Bonnet left her to go to the church, and she dragged herself thither on M. Grossetête's arm.

After breakfast, every one went to see the work begun. All the old people of Montégnac were likewise present. Véronique stood between M. Grossetête and M. Bonnet on the top of the steep slope which the new road ascended, whence they could see the alignment of the four new roads, which served as a deposit for the stones taken off the land. Five navvies were clearing a space of eighteen feet (the width of each road), and throwing up a sort of embankment of good soil as they worked. Four men on either side were engaged in making a ditch, and these also made a bank of fertile earth along the edge of the field. Behind them came two men, who dug holes at intervals, and planted trees. In each division, thirty laborers (chosen from among the poor), twenty women, and forty girls and children, eighty-six workers in all, were busy piling up the stones which the workmen riddled out along the bank so as to measure the quantity produced by each group. In this way all went abreast, and with such picked and enthusiastic workers rapid progress was being made. Grossetête promised to send some trees, and to ask for more, among Mme. Graslin's friends. It was evident that there would not be enough in the nursery plantations at the château to supply such a demand.

Towards the end of the day, which was to finish with a great dinner at the château, Farrabesche begged to speak with Mme. Graslin for a moment. Catherine came with him.

"Madame," he said, "you were so kind as to promise me the home farm. You meant to help me to a fortune when you granted me such a favor, but I have come round to Catherine's ideas about our future. If I did well there, there would be jealousy; a word is soon said; I might find things unpleasant, I am afraid, and, besides, Catherine would never

feel comfortable; it would be better for us to keep to ourselves, in fact. So I have come just to ask you if you will give us the land about the mouth of the Gabou, near the common, to farm instead, and a little bit of the wood yonder under the Living Rock. You will have a lot of workmen thereabouts in July, and it would be easy then to build a farmhouse on a knoll in a good situation. We should be very happy. I would send for Guépin, poor fellow, when he comes out of prison; he would work like a horse, and it is likely I might find a wife for him. My man is no do-nothing. No one will come up there to stare at us; we will colonize that bit of land, and it will be my great ambition to make a famous farm for you there. Besides, I have come to suggest a tenant for your great farm—a cousin of Catherine's, who has a little money of his own; he will be better able than I to look after such a big concern as that. In five years' time, please God, you will have five or six thousand head of cattle or horses down there in the plain that they are breaking up, and it will really take a good head to look after it all."

Mme. Graslin recognized the good sense of Farrabesche's request, and granted it.

As soon as a beginning was made in the plain, Mme. Graslin fell into the even ways of a country life. She went to mass in the morning, watched over the education of the son whom she idolized, and went to see her workmen. After dinner she was at home to her friends in the little drawing-room on the first floor of the centre tower. She taught Roubaud, Clousier, and the curé whist—Gérard knew the game already—and when the party broke up towards nine o'clock, every one went home. The only events in the pleasant life were the successes of the different parts of the great enterprise.

June came, the bed of the Gabou was dry, Gérard had taken up his quarters in the old keeper's cottage; for Farrabesche's farmhouse was finished by this time, and fifty masons, obtained from Paris, were building a wall across the valley

from side to side. The masonry was twenty feet thick at the base, gradually sloping away to half that thickness at the top, and the whole length of it was embedded in twelve feet of solid concrete. On the side of the valley Gérard added a course of concrete with a sloping surface twelve feet thick at the base, and a similar support on the side nearest the commons, covered with leaf-mold several feet deep, made a substantial barrier which the flood-water could not break through. In case of a very wet season, Gérard contrived a channel at a suitable height for the overflow. Everywhere the masonry was carried down on the solid rock (granite, or tufa), that the water might not escape at the sides. By the middle of August the dam was finished. Meanwhile, Gérard also prepared three channels in the three principal valleys, and all of the undertakings cost less than the estimate. In this way the farm by the château could be put in working order.

The irrigation channels in the plain under Fresquin's superintendence corresponded with the natural canal at the base of the hills; all the water-courses departed thence. The great abundance of flints enabled him to pave all the channels, and sluices were constructed so that the water might be kept at the required height in them.

Every Sunday after mass Véronique went down through the park with Gérard and the curé, the doctor, and the mayor, to see how the system of water-supply was working. The winter of 1833–1834 was very wet. The water from the three streams had been turned into the torrent, and the flood had made the valley of the Gabou into three lakes, arranged of set design one above the other, so as to form a reserve for times of great drought. In places where the valley widened out, Gérard had taken advantage of one or two knolls to make an island here and there, and to plant them with different trees. This vast engineering operation had completely altered the appearance of the landscape, but it would still be five or six years before it would take its true character.

"The land was quite naked," Farrabesche used to say, "and now madame has clothed it." After all these great changes, every one spoke of Véronique as "madame" in the countryside. When the rains ceased in June, 1834, trial was made of the irrigation system in the part of the plain where seed had been sown; and the green growth thus watered was of the same fine quality as in an Italian *marcita*, or a Swiss meadow. The method in use on farms in Lombardy had been employed; the whole surface was kept evenly moist, and the plain was as even as a carpet. The nitre in the snow, dissolved in the water, doubtless contributed not a little to the fineness of the grass. Gérard hoped that the produce would be something like that of Switzerland, where, as is well known, this substance is an inexhaustible source of riches. The trees planted along the roadsides, drawing water sufficient from the ditches, made rapid progress. So it came to pass that in 1838, five years after Mme. Graslin came to Montégnac, the waste land, condemned as sterile by twenty generations, was a green and fertile plain, the whole of it under cultivation.

Gérard had built houses for five farms, besides the large one at the château; Gérard's farm, like Grossetête's and Fresquin's, received the overflow from Mme. Graslin's estate; they were conducted on the same methods, and laid out on the same lines. Gérard built a charming lodge on his own property.

When all was finished, the township of Montégnac acted on the suggestion of its mayor, who was delighted to resign his office to Gérard, and the surveyor became mayor in his stead.

In 1840 the departure of the first herd of fat cattle sent from Montégnac to the Paris markets was an occasion for a rural fête. Cattle and horses were raised on the farms in the plain; for when the ground was cleared, seven inches of mold were usually found, which were manured by pasturing

cattle on them, and continually enriched by the leaves that fell every autumn from trees, and, first and foremost, by the melted snow-water from the reservoirs in the Gabou.

It was in this year that Mme. Graslin decided that a tutor must be found for her son, now eleven years old. She was unwilling to part with him, and yet desired to make a well-educated man of her boy. M. Bonnet wrote to the seminary. Mme. Graslin, on her side, let fall a few words concerning her wishes and her difficulty to Monseigneur Dutheil, recently appointed to an archbisopric. It was a great and serious matter to make choice of a man who must spend at least nine months out of twelve at the château. Gérard had offered already to ground his friend Francis in mathematics, but it was impossible to do without a tutor; and this choice that she must make was the more formidable to Mme. Graslin because she knew that her health was giving way. As the value of the land in her beloved Montégnac increased, she redoubled the secret austerities of her life.

Monseigneur Dutheil, with whom Mme. Graslin still corresponded, found her the man for whom she wished. He sent a schoolmaster named Ruffin from his own diocese. Ruffin was a young man of five-and-twenty with a genius for private teaching; he was widely read; in spite of an excessive sensibility, could, when necessary, show himself sufficiently severe for the education of a child, nor was his piety in any way prejudicial to his knowledge; finally, he was patient and pleasant-looking.

"This is a real gift which I am sending you, my dear daughter," so the archbishop wrote; "the young man is worthy to be the tutor of a prince, so I count upon you to secure his future, for he will be your son's spiritual father."

M. Ruffin was so much liked by Mme. Graslin's little circle of faithful friends that his coming made no change in the

various intimacies of those who grouped about their idol, seized with a sort of jealousy on the hours and moments spent with her.

The year 1843 saw the prosperity of Montégnac increasing beyond all hopes. The farm on the Gabou rivaled the farms on the plain, and the château led the way in all improvements. The five other farms, which by the terms of the lease paid an increasing rent, and would each bring in the sum of thirty thousand francs in twelve years' time, then brought in sixty thousand francs a year all told. The farmers were just beginning to reap the benefits of their self-denial and Mme. Graslin's sacrifices, and could afford to manure the meadows in the plain where the finest crops grew without fear of dry seasons. The Gabou farm paid its first rent of four thousand francs joyously.

It was in this year that a man in Montégnac started a *diligence* between the chief town in the arrondissement and Limoges; a coach ran either way daily. M. Clousier's nephew sold his clerkship and obtained permission to practice as a notary, and Fresquin was appointed to be tax-collector in the canton. Then the new notary built himself a pretty house in upper Montégnac, planted mulberry trees on his land, and became Gérard's deputy. And Gérard himself, grown bold with success, thought of a plan which was to bring Mme. Graslin a colossal fortune; for this year she paid off her loan, and began to receive interest from her investment in the funds. This was Gérard's scheme: He would turn the little river into a canal by diverting the abundant water of the Gabou into it. This canal should effect a junction with the Vienne, and in this way it would be possible to exploit twenty thousand acres of the vast forest of Montégnac. The woods were admirably superintended by Colorat, but hitherto had brought in nothing on account of the difficulty of transport. With this arrangement it would be possible to fell a thousand acres every year (thus dividing the forest into twenty strips for suc-

cessive cuttings), and the valuable timber for building purposes could be sent by water to Limoges. This had been Graslin's plan ; he had scarcely listened to the curé's projects for the plain, he was far more interested in the scheme for making a canal of the little river.

V.

VÉRONIQUE LAID IN THE TOMB.

In the beginning of the following year, in spite of Mme. Graslin's bearing, her friends saw warning signs that death was near. To all Roubaud's observations, as to the utmost ingenuity of the most keen-sighted questioners, Véronique gave but one answer, "She felt wonderfully well." Yet that spring, when she revisited forest and farms and her rich meadows, it was with a childlike joy that plainly spoke of sad forebodings.

Gérard had been obliged to make a low wall of concrete from the dam across the Gabou to the park at Montégnac along the base of the lower slope of the hill of the Corrèze; this had suggested an idea to him. He would enclose the whole forest of Montégnac, and throw the park into it. Mme. Graslin put by thirty thousand francs a year for this purpose. It would take seven years to complete the wall; but when it was finished, the splendid forest would be exempted from the dues claimed by the government over unenclosed woods and lands, and the three ponds in the Gabou valley would lie within the circuit of the park. Each of the ponds, proudly dubbed "a lake," had its island. This year, too, Gérard, in concert with Grossetête, prepared a surprise for Mme. Graslin's birthday; he had built on the second and largest island a little *Chartreuse*—a summer-house, satisfactorily rustic without and perfectly elegant within. The old banker was in the plot, so were Farrabesche, Fresquin, and Clousier's nephew, and most of the well-to-do folk in Montégnac. Grossetête sent the pretty furniture. The bell tower, copied from the tower of Vevay, produced a charming effect in the landscape. Six boats (two for each lake) had been secretly built,

rigged, and painted during the winter by Farrabesche and Guépin, with some help from the village carpenter at Montégnac.

So one morning in the middle of May, after Mme. Graslin's friends had breakfasted with her, they led her out into the park, which Gérard had managed for the last five years as architect and naturalist. It had been admirably laid out, sloping down towards the pleasant meadows in the Gabou valley, where below, on the first lake, two boats were in readiness for them. The meadowland, watered by several clear streams, had been taken in at the base of the great amphitheatre at the head of the Gabou valley. The woods round about them had been carefully thinned and disposed with a view to the effect; here the shapeliest masses of trees, there a charming inlet of meadow; there was an air of loneliness about the forest-surrounded place which soothed the soul.

On a bit of rising ground by the lake Gérard had carefully reproduced the chalet which all travelers see and admire on the road to Brieg, through the Rhone valley. This was to be the château, dairy, and cow-shed. From the balcony there was a view over this landscape created by the engineer's art, a view comparable, since the lakes had been made, to the loveliest Swiss scenery.

It was a glorious day. Not a cloud in the blue sky, and on the earth beneath, the myriad gracious chance effects that the fair May month can give. Light wreaths of mist, risen from the lake, still hung like a thin smoke about the trees by the water's edge—willows and weeping willows, ash and alder and abeles, Lombard and Canadian poplars, white and pink hawthorn, birch and acacia, had been grouped about the lake, as the nature of the ground and the trees themselves (all finely grown specimens now ten years old) suggested. The high green wall of forest trees was reflected in the sheet of water, clear as a mirror, and serene as the sky; their topmost crests, clearly outlined in that limpid atmosphere, stood out in con-

trast with the thicket below them, veiled in delicate green undergrowth. The lakes, divided by strongly-built embankments with a causeway along them that served as a short cut from side to side of the valley, lay like three mirrors, each with a different reflecting surface, the water trickling from one to another in musical cascades. And beyond this, from the chalet you caught a glimpse of the bleak and barren common lands, the pale chalky soil (seen from the balcony) looked like a wide sea, and supplied a contrast with the fresh greenery about the lake. Véronique saw the gladness in her friends' faces as their hands were held out to assist her to enter the larger boat, tears rose to her eyes, and they rowed on in silence until they reached the first causeway. Here they landed, to embark again on the second lake; and Véronique, looking up, saw the summer-house on the island, and Grossetête and his family sitting on a bench before it.

"They are determined to make me regret life, it seems," she said, turning to the curé.

"We want to keep you among us," Clousier said.

"There is no putting life into the dead," she answered; but at M. Bonnet's look of rebuke, she withdrew into herself again.

"Simply let me have the charge of your health," pleaded Roubaud in a gentle voice; "I am sure that I could preserve her who is the living glory of the canton, the common bond that unites the lives of all our friends."

Véronique bent her head, while Gérard rowed slowly out towards the island in the middle of the sheet of water, the largest of the three. The upper lake chanced to be too full; the distant murmur of the weir seemed to find a voice for the lovely landscape.

"You did well indeed to bring me here to bid farewell to this entrancing view!" she said, as she saw the beauty of the trees so full of leaves that they hid the bank on either side.

The only sign of disapprobation which Véronique's friends permitted themselves was a gloomy silence; and, at a second glance from M. Bonnet, she sprang lightly from the boat with an apparent gaiety, which she sustained. Once more she became the lady of the manor, and so charming was she that the Grossetête family thought that they saw in her the beautiful Mme. Graslin of old days.

"Assuredly, you may live yet," her mother said in Véronique's ear.

On that pleasant festival day, in the midst of a scene sublimely transformed by the use of nature's own resources, how should anything wound Véronique? Yet then and there she received her death-blow.

It had been arranged that the party should return home towards nine o'clock by way of the meadows; for the roads, quite as fine as any in England or Italy, were the pride of their engineer. There were flints in abundance; as the stones were taken off the land they had been piled in heaps by the roadside; and with such plenty of road-material, it was so easy to keep the ways in good order that in five years' time they were in a manner macadamized. Carriages were waiting for the party at the lower end of the valley nearest the plain, almost under the Living Rock. The horses had all been bred in Montégnac. Their trial formed part of the programme for the day; for these were the first that were ready for sale, the manager of the stud having just sent ten of them up to the stables of the château. Four handsome animals in light and plain harness were to draw Mme. Graslin's calèche, a present from Grossetête.

After dinner the joyous company went to take coffee on a promontory where a little wooden kiosk had been erected, a copy of one on the shores of the Bosphorus. From this point there was a wide outlook over the lowest lake, stretching away to the great barrier across the Gabou, now covered thickly with a luxuriant growth of green, a charming spot for

the eyes to rest upon. Colorat's house and the old cottage, now restored, were the only buildings in the landscape; Colorat's capacities were scarcely adequate for the difficult post of head forester in Montégnac, so he had succeeded to Farrabesche's office.

From this point Mme. Graslin fancied that she could see Francis near Farrabesche's nursery of saplings; she looked for the child, and could not find him, till M. Ruffin pointed him out playing on the brink of the lake with M. Grossetête's great-grandchildren. Véronique felt afraid that some accident might happen, and, without listening to remonstrances, sprang into one of the boats, landed on the causeway, and herself hurried away in search of her son. This little incident broke up the party on the island. Grossetête, now a venerable great-grandfather, was the first to suggest a walk along the beautiful field-path that wound up and down by the side of the lower lakes.

Mme. Graslin saw Francis a long way off. He was with a woman in mourning, who had thrown her arms about him. She seemed to be from a foreign country, judging by her dress and the shape of her hat. Véronique in dismay called her son to her.

"Who is that woman?" she asked of the other children; "and why did Francis go away from you?"

"The lady called him by his name," said one of the little girls. Mme. Sauviat and Gérard, who were ahead of the others, came up at that moment.

"Who is that woman, dear?" said Mme. Graslin, turning to Francis.

"I do not know," he said, "but no one kisses me like that except you and grandmamma. She was crying," he added in his mother's ear.

"Shall I run and fetch her?" asked Gérard.

"No!" said Mme. Graslin, with a curtness very unusual with her.

With kindly tact, which Véronique appreciated, Gérard took the little ones with him and went back to meet the others; so that Mme. Sauviat, Mme. Graslin, and Francis were left together.

"What did she say to you?" asked Mme. Sauviat, addressing her grandson.

"I don't know. She did not speak French."

"Did you not understand anything she said?" asked Véronique.

"Oh, yes; one thing she said over and over again, that is how I can remember it—*dear brother!* she said."

Véronique leaned on her mother's arm and took her child's hand, but she could scarcely walk, and her strength failed her.

"What is it?—— What has happened?"—— every one asked of Mme. Sauviat.

A cry broke from the old Auvergnate: "Oh! my daughter is in danger!" she exclaimed, in her guttural accent and deep voice.

Mme. Graslin had to be carried to her carriage. She ordered Aline to keep beside Francis, and beckoned to Gérard.

"You have been in England, I believe," she said, when she had recovered herself; "do you understand English? What do these words mean—*dear brother?*"

"That is very simple," said Gérard, and he explained.

Véronique exchanged glances with Aline and Mme. Sauviat; the two women shuddered, but controlled their feelings. Mme. Graslin sank into a torpor from which nothing roused her; she did not heed the gleeful voices as the carriages started, nor the splendor of the sunset light on the meadows, the even pace of the horses, nor the laughter of the friends who followed them on horseback at a gallop. Her mother bade the man drive faster, and her carriage was the first to reach the château. When the rest arrived they were told that Véronique had gone to her room, and would see no one.

"I am afraid that Mme. Graslin must have received a fatal wound," Gérard began, speaking to his friends.

"Where?—— How?" asked they.

"In the heart," answered Gérard.

Two days later Roubaud set out for Paris. He had seen that Mme. Graslin's life was in danger, and to save her he had gone to summon the first doctor in Paris to give his opinion of the case. But Véronique had only consented to see Roubaud to put an end to the importunities of Aline and her mother, who begged her to be more careful of herself; she knew that she was dying. She declined to see M. Bonnet, saying that the time had not yet come; and although all the friends who had come from Limoges for her birthday festival were anxious to stay with her, she entreated them to pardon her if she could not fulfill the duties of hospitality, but she needed the most profound solitude. So, after Roubaud's sudden departure, the guests left the château of Montégnac and went back to Limoges, not so much in disappointment as in despair, for all who had come with Grossetête adored Véronique, and were utterly at a loss as to the cause of this mysterious disaster.

One evening, two days after Grossetête's large family party had left the château, Aline brought a visitor to Mme. Graslin's room. It was Catherine Farrabesche. At first Catherine stood glued to the spot, so astonished was she at this sudden change in her mistress, the features so drawn.

"Good God! madame, what harm that poor girl has done! If only we could have known, Farrabesche and I, we would never have taken her in. She has just heard that madame is ill, and sent me to tell Mme. Sauviat that she should like to speak to her."

"*Here!*" cried Véronique. "Where is she at this moment?"

"My husband took her over to the chalet."

"Good," said Mme. Graslin; "leave us, and tell Farra-

besche to go. Tell the lady to wait, and my mother will go to see her."

At nightfall Véronique, leaning on her mother's arm, crept slowly across the park to the chalet. The moon shone with its most brilliant glory, the night air was soft; the two women, both shaken with emotion that they could not conceal, received in some sort the encouragement of nature. From moment to moment Mme. Sauviat stopped and made her daughter rest; for Véronique's sufferings were so poignant that it was nearly midnight before they reached the path that turned down through the wood to the meadows, where the chalet roof sparkled like silver. The moonlight on the surface of the still water lent it a pearly hue. The faint noises of the night, which travel so far in the silence, made up a delicate harmony of sound.

Véronique sat down on the bench outside the chalet in the midst of the glorious spectacle beneath the starry skies. The murmur of two voices and footfalls on the sands made by two persons still some distance away was borne to her by the water, which transmits every sound in the stillness as faithfully as it reflects everything in its calm surface. There was an exquisite quality in the intonation of one of the voices, by which Véronique recognized the curé, and with the rustle of his cassock was blended the light sound of a silk dress. Evidently there was a woman.

"Let us go in," she said to her mother. Mme. Sauviat and Véronique sat down on a manger in the low, large room built for a cow-shed.

"I am not blaming you at all, my child," the curé was saying; "but you may be the innocent cause of an irreparable misfortune, for she is the life and soul of this wide countryside."

"Oh, monsieur! I will go to-night," the stranger woman's voice answered; "but—I can say this to you—it will be like death to me to leave my country a second time. If I had

stayed a day longer in that horrible New York or in the United States, where there is neither hope nor faith nor charity, I should have died without any illness. The air I was breathing hurt my chest, the food did me no good, I was dying though I looked full of life and health. When I stepped on board the suffering ceased; I felt as if I were in France. Ah, monsieur! I have seen my mother and my brother's wife die of grief. And then my grandfather and grandmother Tascheron died—died, dear M. Bonnet, in spite of the unheard-of prosperity of Tascheronville—— Yes. Our father began a settlement, a village in Ohio, and now the village is almost a town. One-third of the land thereabouts belongs to our family, for God has watched over us all along, and the farms have done well, our crops are magnificent, and we are rich—so rich that we managed to build a Catholic church. The whole town is Catholic; we will not allow any other worship, and we hope to convert all the endless sects about us by our example. The true faith is in a minority in that dreary, mercenary land of the dollar, a land which chills one to the soul. Still I would go back to die there sooner than to do the least harm here or give the slightest pain to the mother of our dear Francis. Only take me to the parsonage house to-night, dear M. Bonnet, so that I can pray awhile on *his* grave; it was just that that drew me here, for as I came nearer and nearer the place where *he* lies I felt quite a different being. No, I did not believe I should feel so happy here——"

"Very well," said the curé; "come, let us go. If at some future day you can come back without evil consequences, I will write to tell you, Denise; but perhaps after this visit to your old home you may feel able to live yonder without suffering——"

"Leave this country now when it is so beautiful here! Just see what Mme. Graslin has made of the Gabou!" she added, pointing to the moonlit lake. "And then all this will belong to our dear Francis——"

"You shall not go, Denise," said Mme. Graslin, appearing in the stable doorway.

Jean-François Tascheron's sister clasped her hands at the sight of this ghost who spoke to her; for Véronique's white face in the moonlight looked unsubstantial as a shadow against the dark background of the open stable-door. Her eyes glittered like two stars.

"No, child, you shall not leave the country you have traveled so far to see, and you shall be happy here, unless God should refuse to second my efforts; for God, no doubt, has sent you here, Denise."

She took the astonished girl's hand in hers, and went with her down the path towards the opposite shore of the lake. Mme. Sauviat and the curé, left alone, sat down on the bench.

"Let her have her way," murmured Mme. Sauviat.

A few minutes later Véronique returned alone; her mother and the curé brought her back to the château. Doubtless she had thought of some plan of action which suited the mystery, for nobody saw Denise, no one knew that she had come back.

Mme. Graslin took to her bed, nor did she leave it. Every day she grew worse. It seemed to vex her that she could not rise, for again and again she made vain efforts to get up and take a walk in the park. One morning in early June, some days after that night at the chalet, she made a violent effort and rose and tried to dress herself, as if for a festival. She begged Gérard to lend her his arm; for her friends came daily for news of her, and when Aline said that her mistress meant to go out they all hurried up to the château. Mme. Graslin had summoned all her remaining strength to spend it on this last walk. She gained her object by a violent spasmodic effort of the will, inevitably followed by a deadly reaction.

"Let us go to the chalet—and alone," she said to Gérard. The tones of her voice were soft, and there was something

like coquetry in her glance. "This is my last escapade, for I dreamed last night that the doctors had come."

"Would you like to see your woods?" asked Gérard.

"For the last time. But," she added, in coaxing tones, "I have some strange proposals to make to you."

Gérard, by her direction, rowed her across the second lake, when she had reached it on foot. He was at a loss to understand such a journey, but she indicated the summer-house as their destination, and he plied his oars.

There was a long pause. Her eyes wandered over the hill-sides, the water, and the sky; then she spoke.

"My friend, it is a strange request that I am about to make to you, but I think that you are the man to obey me."

"In everything," he said, "sure as I am that you cannot will anything but good."

"I want you to marry," she said; "you will fulfill the wishes of a dying woman, who is certain that she is securing your happiness."

"I am too ugly!" said Gérard.

"*She* is pretty, she is young, she wants to live in Montégnac; and if you marry her, you will do something towards making my last moments easier. We need not discuss her qualities. I tell you this, that she is a woman of a thousand; and as for her charms, youth, and beauty, the first sight will suffice, we shall see her in a moment in the summer-house. On our way back you shall give me your answer, a 'Yes' or a 'No,' in sober earnest."

Mme. Graslin smiled as she saw the oars move more swiftly after this confidence. Denise, who was living out of sight in the island sanctuary, saw Mme. Graslin, and hurried to the door. Véronique and Gérard came in. In spite of herself, the poor girl flushed as she met the eyes that Gérard turned upon her; Denise's beauty was an agreeable surprise to him.

"La Curieux does not let you want for anything, does she?" asked Véronique.

"Look, madame," said Denise, pointing to the breakfast table.

"This is M. Gérard, of whom I have spoken to you," Véronique went on. "He will be my son's guardian, and when I am dead you will all live together at the château until Francis comes of age."

"Oh, madame! don't talk like that."

"Just look at me, child!" said Véronique, and all at once she saw tears in the girl's eyes. "She comes from New York," she added, turning to Gérard.

This by way of putting both on a footing of acquaintance. Gérard asked questions of Denise, and Mme. Graslin left them to chat, going to look out over the view of the last lake on the Gabou. At six o'clock Gérard and Véronique rowed back to the chalet.

"Well?" queried she, looking at her friend.

"You have my word."

"You may be without prejudices," Véronique began, "but you ought to know how it was that she was obliged to leave the country, poor child, brought back by a home-sick longing."

"A slip?"

"Oh, no," said Véronique, "or should I introduce her to you? She is the sister of a workman who died on the scaffold——"

"Oh! Tascheron, who murdered old Pingret——"

"Yes. She is a murderer's sister," said Mme. Graslin, with inexpressible irony in her voice; "you can take back your word."

She went no further. Gérard was compelled to carry her to the bench at the chalet, and for some minutes she lay there unconscious. Gérard, kneeling beside her, said, as soon as she opened her eyes—

"I will marry Denise."

Mme. Graslin made him rise, she took his head in her

hands, and set a kiss on his forehead. Then, seeing that he was astonished to be thus thanked, she grasped his hand and said—

"You will soon know the meaning of this puzzle. Let us try to reach the terrace again, our friends are there. It is very late, and I feel very weak, and yet I should like to bid farewell from afar to this dear plain of mine."

The weather had been intolerably hot all day; and though the storms, which did so much damage that year in different parts of Europe and in France itself, respected the Limousin, there had been thunder along the Loire, and the air began to grow fresher. The sky was so pure that the least details on the horizon were sharp and clear. What words can describe the delicious concert of sounds, the smothered hum of the township, now alive with workers returning from the fields? It would need the combined work of a great landscape painter and a painter of figures to do justice to such a picture. Is there not, in fact, a subtle connection between the lassitude of nature and the laborer's weariness, an affinity of mood hardly to be rendered? In the tepid twilight of the dog days, the rarefied air gives its full significance to the least sound made by every living thing.

The women sit chatting at their doors with a bit of work even then in their hands, as they wait for the good man who, probably, will bring the children home. The smoke going up from the roofs is the sign of the last meal of the day and the gayest for the peasants; after it they will sleep. The stir at that hour is the expression of happy and tranquil thoughts in those who have finished their day's work. There is a very distinct difference between their evening and morning snatches of song; for in this the village-folk are like the birds, the last twitterings at night are utterly unlike their notes at dawn. All nature joins in the hymn of rest at the end of the day, as in the hymn of gladness at sunrise; all things take the softly-blended hues that the sunset throws across the fields, tingeing

the dusty roads with mellow light. If any should be bold enough to deny the influences of the fairest hour of the day, the very flowers would convict him of falsehood, intoxicating him with their subtlest scents, mingled with the tenderest sounds of insects the amorous faint twitter of birds.

Thin films of mist hovered above the "water-lanes" that furrowed the plain below the township. The poplars and acacias and sumach trees, planted in equal numbers along the roads, had grown so tall already that they shaded it, and in the wide fields on either side the large and celebrated herds of cattle were scattered about in groups, some still browsing, others chewing the cud. Men, women, and children were busy getting in the last of the hay, the most picturesque of all field-work. The evening air, less languid since the sudden breath of coolness after the storms, brought the wholesome scents of mown grass and swathes of hay. The least details in the beautiful landscape stood out perfectly sharp and clear.

There was some fear for the weather. The ricks were being finished in all haste; men hurried about them with loaded forks, raked the heaps together, and loaded the carts. Out in the distance the scythes were still busy, the women were turning the long swathes that looked like hatched lines across the fields into dotted rows of haycocks.

Sounds of laughter came up from the hayfields, the workers frolicked over their work, the children shouted as they buried each other in the heaps. Every figure was distinct, the women's petticoats, pink, red, or blue, their kerchiefs, their bare arms and legs, the wide-brimmed straw hats of field-workers, the men's shirts, the white trousers that nearly all of them wore.

The last rays of sunlight fell like a bright dust over the long lines of poplar trees by the channels which divided up the plain into fields of various sizes, and lingered caressingly over the groups of men, women, and children, horses and carts and cattle. The shepherds and herdsmen began to gather their

flocks together with the sound of their horns. The plain seemed so silent and so full of sound, a strange antithesis, but only strange to those who do not know the splendors of the fields. Loads of green fodder came into the township from every side. There was something indescribably somnolent in the influence of the scene, and Véronique, between the curé and Gérard, uttered no word.

At last they came to a gap made by a rough track that led from the houses ranged below the terrace to the parsonage house and the church; and, looking down into Montégnac, Gérard and M. Bonnet saw the upturned faces of the women, men, and children, all looking at them. Doubtless it was Mme. Graslin more particularly whom they followed with their eyes. And what affection and gratitude there were in their way of doing this! With what blessings did they not greet Véronique's appearance! With what devout intentness they watched the three benefactors of a whole countryside! It was as if man added a hymn of gratitude to all the songs of evening. While Mme. Graslin walked with her eyes set on the magnificent distant expanse of green, her dearest creation, the mayor and the curé watched the groups below. There was no mistake about their expression; grief, melancholy, and regret, mingled with hope, were plainly visible in them all. There was not a soul in Montégnac but knew how that M. Roubaud had gone to Paris to fetch some great doctors, and that the beneficent lady of the canton was nearing the end of a fatal illness. On market-days, in every place for thirty miles round, the peasants asked the Montégnac folk, "How is your mistress?" And so the great thought of death hovered over this countryside, amid the fair picture of the hayfields.

Far off in the plain, more than one mower sharpening his scythe, more than one girl leaning on her rake, or farmer among his stacks of hay, looked up and paused thoughtfully to watch Mme. Graslin, their great lady, the pride of the

Corrèze. They tried to discover some hopeful sign, or watched her admiringly, prompted by a feeling which put work out of their minds. "She is out of doors, so she must be better!" The simple phrase was on all lips.

Mme. Graslin's mother was sitting at the end of the terrace. Véronique had placed a cast-iron garden-seat in the corner, so that she might sit there and look down into the churchyard through the balustrade. Mme. Sauviat watched her daughter as she walked along the terrace, and her eyes filled with tears. She knew something of the preternatural effort which Véronique was making; she knew that even at that moment her daughter was suffering fearful pain, and that it was only a heroic effort of will that enabled her to stand. Tears, almost like tears of blood, found their way down among the sunburned wrinkles of a face like parchment, that seemed as if it could not alter one crease for any emotion any more. Little Graslin, standing between M. Ruffin's knees, cried for sympathy.

"What is the matter, child?" the tutor asked sharply.

"Grandmamma is crying——"

M. Ruffin's eyes had been fixed on Mme. Graslin, who was coming towards them; he looked at Mme. Sauviat; the Roman matron's face, stony with sorrow and wet with tears, gave him a great shock. That dumb grief had invested the old woman with a certain grandeur and sacredness.

"Madame, why did you let her go out?" asked the tutor.

Véronique was coming nearer. She walked like a queen, with admirable grace in her whole bearing. And Mme. Sauviat knew that she should outlive her daughter, and in the cry of despair that broke from her a secret escaped that revealed many things which roused curiosity.

"To think of it! She walks and wears a horrible hair shirt always pricking her skin!"

The young man's blood ran cold at her words; he could not be insensible to the exquisite grace of Véronique's move-

ments, and shuddered as he thought of the cruel, unrelenting mastery that the soul must have gained over the body. A Parisienne famed for her graceful figure, the ease of her carriage and bearing, might perhaps have feared comparison with Véronique at that moment.

"She has worn it for thirteen years, ever since the child was weaned," the old woman said, pointing to young Graslin. "She has worked miracles here; and if they but knew her life, they might put her among the saints. Nobody has seen her eat since she came here, do you know why? Aline brings her a bit of dry bread three times a day on a great platter full of ashes, and vegetables cooked in water without any salt, on a red earthenware dish that they put a dog's food in! Yes. That is the way she lives who has given life to the canton. She says her prayers kneeling on the hem of her cilice. She says that if she did not practice these austerities she could not wear the smiling face you see. I am telling you this" (and the old woman's voice dropped lower) "for you to tell it to the doctor that M. Roubaud has gone to fetch from Paris. If he will prevent my daughter from continuing these penances, they might save her yet (who knows?), though the hand of death is on her head. Look! Ah, I must be very strong to have borne all these things for fifteen years."

The old woman took her grandson's hand, raised it, and passed it over her forehead and cheeks as if some restorative balm communicated itself in the touch of the little hand; then she set a kiss upon it, a kiss full of the love which is the secret of grandmothers no less than mothers. By this time Véronique was only a few paces distant, Clousier was with her, and the curé and Gérard. Her face, lit up by the setting sun, was radiant with awful beauty.

One thought, steadfast amid many inward troubles, seemed to be written in the lines that furrowed the sallow forehead in long folds piled one above the other, like clouds. The outlines of her face, now completely colorless, entirely white

with the dead olive-tinged whiteness of plants grown without sunlight, were thin but not withered, and showed traces of great physical suffering produced by mental anguish. She had quelled the body through the soul, and the soul through the body. So completely worn out was she that she resembled her past self only as an old woman resembles her portrait painted in girlhood. The glowing expression of her eyes spoke of the absolute domination of a Christian will over a body reduced to the subjection required by religion, for in this woman the flesh was at the mercy of the spirit. As in profane poetry Achilles dragged the dead body of Hector, victoriously she dragged it over the stormy ways of life; and thus for fifteen years she had compassed the heavenly Jerusalem which she had hoped to enter, not as a thief, but amid triumphant acclamations. Never was anchorite amid the parched and arid deserts of Africa more master of his senses than Véronique in her splendid château in a rich land of soft and luxurious landscape, nestling under the mantle of the great forest where science, heir to Moses' rod, had caused plenty to spring forth and the prosperity and the welfare of a whole countryside. Véronique was looking out over the results of twelve years of patience, on the accomplishment of a task on which a man of ability might have prided himself; but with the gentle modesty which Pontorno's brush had depicted in the expression of his symbolical "Christian Chastity"—with her arms about the unicorn. Her two companions respected her silent mood when they saw that she was gazing over the vast plain, once sterile, and now fertile; the devout lady of the manor went with folded arms and eyes fixed on the point where the road reached the horizon.

Suddenly she stopped when but two paces away from Mme. Sauviat, who watched her as Christ's mother must have gazed at her Son upon the cross. Véronique raised her hand and pointed to the spot where the road turned off to Montégnac.

"Do you see that calèche and the four post-horses?" she asked, smiling. "That is M. Roubaud. He is coming back. We shall soon know now how many hours I have to live."

"*Hours!*" echoed Gérard.

"Did I not tell you that this was my last walk?" she said. "Did I not come to see this beautiful view in all its glory for the last time?"

She indicated the fair meadow land, lit up by the last rays of the sun, and the township below. All the village had come out and stood in the square in front of the church.

"Ah!" she went on, "let me think that there is God's benediction in the strange atmospheric conditions that have favored our hay-harvest. Storms all about us, rain and hail and thunder have laid waste pitilessly and incessantly, but not here. The people think so; why should not I follow their example? I need so much to find some good augury on earth for that which awaits me when my eyes shall be closed!"

Her child came to her, took his mother's hand, and laid it on his hair. The great eloquence of that movement touched Véronique; with preternatural strength she caught him up, held him on her left arm a moment as she used to hold him as a child at the breast, and kissed him. "Do you see this land, my boy?" she said. "You must go on with your mother's work when you are a man."

Then the curé spoke sadly: "There are a very few strong and privileged natures who are permitted to see death face to face, to fight a long duel with him, and to show courage and skill that strike others with admiration; this is the dreadful spectacle that you give us, madame; but, perhaps, you are somewhat wanting in pity for us. Leave us at least the hope that you are mistaken, that God will permit you to finish all that you have begun."

"I have done nothing save through you, my friend," said she. "It was in my power to be useful to you; it is so no longer. Everything about us is green; there is no desolate waste here now, save my own heart. You know it, dear curé, you know that I can only find peace and pardon *there*——"

She held out her hand over the churchyard. She had never said so much since the day when she first came to Montégnac and fainted away on that very spot. The curé gazed at his penitent; and, accustomed as he had been for long to read her thoughts, he knew from those simple words that he had won a fresh victory. It must have cost Véronique a terrible effort over herself to break a twelve years' silence with such pregnant words; and the curé clasped his hands with the devout fervor familiar to him, and looked with deep religious emotion on the family group about him. All their secrets had passed through his heart.

Gérard looked bewildered; the words "peace and pardon" seemed to sound strangely in his ears; M. Ruffin's eyes were fixed in a sort of dull amazement on Mme. Graslin. And meanwhile the calèche sped rapidly along the road, threading its way from tree to tree.

"There are five of them!" said the curé, who could see and count the travelers.

"Five!" exclaimed M. Gérard. "Will five of them know more than two?"

"Ah!" murmured Mme. Graslin, who leaned on the curé's arm, "there is the public prosecutor. "What does he come to do here?"

"And papa Grossetête too!" cried Francis.

"Madame, take courage, be worthy of yourself," said the curé. He drew Mme. Graslin, who was leaning heavily on him, a few paces aside.

"What does he want?" she said for all answer, and she went to lean against the balustrade. "Mother!" she exclaimed, despairingly.

Mme. Sauviat sprang forward with an activity that belied her years.

"I shall see him again——" said Véronique.

"If he is coming with M. Grossetête," said the curé, "it can only be with good intentions, of course."

"Ah! sir, my daughter is dying!" cried Mme. Sauviat, seeing the change that passed over Mme. Graslin's face at the words. "How will she endure such cruel agitations? M. Grossetête has always prevented that man from coming to see Véronique——"

Véronique's face flamed.

"So you hate him, do you?" the Abbé Bonnet asked, turning to his penitent.

"She left Limoges lest all Limoges should know her secrets," said Mme. Sauviat, terrified by that sudden change wrought in Mme. Graslin's drawn features.

"Do you not see that his presence will poison the hours that remain to me, when heaven alone should be in my thoughts? He is nailing me down to earth!" cried Véronique.

The curé took Mme. Graslin's arm once more, and constrained her to walk a few paces; when they were alone, he looked full at her with one of those angelic looks which calm the most violent tumult in the soul.

"If it is thus," he said, "I, as your confessor, bid you to receive him, to be kind and gracious to him, to lay aside this garment of anger, and to forgive him as God will forgive you. Can there be a taint of passion in the soul that I deemed purified? Burn this last grain of incense on the altar of penitence, lest all shall be one lie in you."

"There was still this last struggle to make, and it is made," she said, drying her eyes. "The evil one was lurking in the last recess in my heart, and doubtless it was God who put into M. de Granville's heart the thought that sends him here. How many times will He smite me yet?" she cried.

She stopped as if to put up an inward prayer; then she turned to Mme. Sauviat, and said in a low voice:

"Mother dear, be nice and kind to M. le Procureur général."

In spite of herself, the old Auvergnate shuddered feverishly.

"There is no hope left," she said, as she caught at the curé's hand.

As she spoke, the cracking of the postillion's whip announced that the calèche was climbing the avenue; the great gateway stood open, the carriage turned in the courtyard, and in another moment the travelers came out upon the terrace. Beside the public prosecutor and M. Grossetête, the archbishop had come (M. Dutheil was in Limoges for Gabriel de Rastignac's consecration as bishop), and M. Roubaud came arm in arm with Horace Bianchon, one of the greatest doctors in Paris.

"You are welcome," said Véronique, addressing her guests, "and *you*" (holding out a hand to the public prosecutor and grasping his) "especially welcome."

M. Grossetête, the archbishop, and Mme. Sauviat exchanged glances at this; so great was their astonishment that it overcame the profound discretion of old age.

"And I thank him who brought you here," Véronique went on, as she looked on the Comte de Granville's face for the first time in fifteen years. "I have borne you a grudge for a long time, but now I know that I have done you an injustice; you shall know the reason of all this if you will stay here in Montégnac for two days." She turned to Horace Bianchon—"This gentleman will confirm my apprehensions, no doubt." Then to the archbishop—"It is God surely who sends you to me, my lord," she said with a bow. "For our old friendship's sake you will not refuse to be with me in my last moments. By what grace, I wonder, have I all those who have loved me and sustained me all my life about me now?"

At the word "love" she turned with graceful, deliberate intent towards M. de Granville; the kindness in her manner brought tears into his eyes. There was a deep silence. The two doctors asked themselves what witchcraft it was that enabled the woman before them to stand upright while enduring the agony which she must suffer. The other three were so shocked at the change that illness had wrought in her that they could only communicate their thoughts by the eyes.

"Permit me to go with these gentlemen," she said, with her unvarying grace of manner; "it is an urgent question." She took leave of her guests, and, leaning upon the two doctors, went towards the château so slowly and painfully that it was evident that the end was at hand.

The archbishop looked at the curé.

"M. Bonnet," he said, "you have worked wonders!"

"Not I, but God, my lord," answered the other.

"They said that she was dying," exclaimed M. Grossetête; "why, she is dead! There is nothing left but a spirit——"

"A soul," said M. Gérard.

"She is the same as ever," cried the public prosecutor.

"She is a Stoic after the manner of the old Greek Zeno," said the tutor.

Silently they went along the terrace and looked out over the landscape that glowed a most glorious red color in the light shed abroad by the fires of the sunset.

"It is thirteen years since I saw this before," said the archbishop, indicating the fertile fields, the valley, and the hill above Montégnac, "so for me this miracle is as extraordinary as another which I have just witnessed; for how can you let Mme. Graslin stand upright? She ought to be lying in bed——"

"So she was," said Mme. Sauviat. "She never left her bed for ten days, but she was determined to get up to see this place for the last time."

"I understand," said M. de Granville. "She wished to

say farewell to all that she had called into being, but she ran the risk of dying here on the terrace."

"M. Roubaud said that she was not to be thwarted," said Mme. Sauviat.

"What a marvelous thing!" exclaimed the archbishop, whose eyes never wearied of wandering over the view. "She has made the waste into sown fields. But we know, monsieur," he added, turning to Gérard, "that your skill and your labors have been a great factor in this."

"We have only been her laborers," the mayor said. "Yes; we are only the hands, she was the head."

Mme. Sauviat left the group, and went to hear what the opinion of the doctor from Paris was.

"We shall stand in need of heroism to be present at this death-bed," said the public prosecutor, addressing the archbishop and the curé.

"Yes," said M. Grossetête; "but for such a friend, great things should be done."

While they waited and came and went, oppressed by heavy thoughts, two of Mme. Graslin's tenants came up. They had come, they said, on behalf of a whole township waiting in painful suspense to hear the verdict of the doctor from Paris.

"They are in consultation, we know nothing as yet, my friends," said the archbishop.

M. Roubaud came hurrying towards them, and at the sound of his quick footsteps the others hastened to meet him.

"Well?" asked the mayor.

"She has not forty-eight hours to live," answered M. Roubaud. "The disease has developed while I was away. M. Bianchon cannot understand how she could walk. These seldom seen phenomena are always the result of great exaltation of mind. And so, gentlemen," he added, speaking to the churchmen, "she has passed out of our hands and into yours; science is powerless; my illustrious colleague thinks that there is scarcely time for the ceremonies of the church."

"Let us put up the prayers appointed for times of great calamity," said the curé, and he went away with his parishioners. "His lordship will no doubt condescend to administer the last sacraments."

The archbishop bowed his head in reply; he could not say a word, his eyes were full of tears. The group sat down or leaned against the balustrade, and each was deep in his own thoughts. The church bells peeled mournfully, the sound of many footsteps came up from below, the whole village was flocking to the service. The light of the altar candles gleamed through the trees in M. Bonnet's garden, and then began the sounds of chanting. A faintly flushed twilight overspread the fields, the birds had ceased to sing, and the only sound in the plain was the shrill, melancholy, long-drawn note of the frogs.

"Let us do our duty," said the archbishop at last, and he went slowly towards the house, like a man who carries a burden greater than he can bear.

The consultation had taken place in the great drawing-room, a vast apartment which communicated with a state bedroom, draped with crimson damask. Here Graslin had exhibited to the full the self-made man's taste for display. Véronique had not entered the room half-a-dozen times in fourteen years; the great suite of apartments was completely useless to her; she had never received visitors in them, but the effort she had made to discharge her last obligations and to quell her revolted physical nature had left her powerless to reach her own rooms.

The great doctor had taken his patient's hand and felt her pulse, then he looked significantly at M. Roubaud, and the two men carried her into the adjoining room and laid her on the bed, Aline hastily flinging open the doors for them. There were, of course, no sheets on the state bed; the two doctors laid Mme. Graslin at full length on the crimson quilt, Roubaud opened the windows, flung back the Venetian shutters, and

summoned help. La Sauviat and the servants came hurrying to the room; they lighted the wax-candles (yellow with age) in the sconces.

Then the dying woman smiled. "It is decreed that my death shall be a festival, as a Christian's death should be."

During the consultation she spoke again—

"The public prosecutor has done his work: I was going; he has despatched me sooner——"

The old mother laid a finger on her lips with a warning glance.

"Mother, I will speak now," Véronique said in answer. "Look! the finger of God is in all this; I shall die very soon in this room hung with red——"

La Sauviat went out in dismay at the words.

"Aline!" she cried, "she is speaking out!——"

"Ah! madame's mind is wandering," said the faithful waiting-woman, coming in with the sheets. "Send for M. le Curé, madame."

"You must undress your mistress," said Bianchon, as soon as Aline entered the room.

"It will be very difficult; madame wears a hair shirt next her skin."

"What?" the great doctor cried, "are such horrors still practiced in this nineteenth century?"

"Mme. Graslin has never allowed me to touch the stomach," said M. Roubaud. "I could learn nothing of her complaint save from her face and her pulse, and from what I could learn from her mother and her maid."

Véronique was laid on a sofa while they made the great bed ready for her at the farther end of the room. The doctors spoke together with lowered voices as La Sauviat and Aline made the bed. There was a look terrible to see in the two women's faces; the same thought was wringing both their hearts. "We are making her bed for the last time—this will be her bed of death."

The consultation was brief. In the first place, Bianchon insisted that Aline and La Sauviat must cut the patient out of the cilice and put her in a nightdress. The two doctors waited in the great drawing-room while this was done. Aline came out with the terrible instrument of penance wrapped in a towel. "Madame is just one wound," she told them.

"Madame, you have a stronger will than Napoleon had," said Bianchon, when the two doctors had come in again, and Véronique had given clear answers to the questions put to her. "You are preserving your faculties in the last stage of a disease in which the Emperor's brilliant intellect sank. From what I know of you, I feel that I owe it to you to tell you the truth."

"I implore you, with clasped hands, to tell it me," she said; "you can measure the strength that remains to me, and I have need of all the life that is in me for a few hours yet."

"You must think of nothing but your salvation," said Bianchon.

"If God grants that body and mind die together," she said, with a divinely sweet smile, "believe that the favor is vouchsafed for the glory of His Church on earth. My mind is still needed to carry out a thought from God, while Napoleon had accomplished his destiny."

The two doctors looked at each other in amazement; the words were spoken as easily as if Mme. Graslin had been in her drawing-room.

"Ah! here is the doctor who will heal me," she added, as the archbishop entered.

She summoned all her strength to sit upright to take leave of M. Bianchon, speaking graciously, and asking him to accept something beside money for the good news which he had just brought her; then she whispered a few words to her mother, who went out with the doctor. She asked the archbishop to wait until the curé should come, and seemed to wish to rest for a little while. Aline sat by her mistress' bedside.

At midnight Mme. Graslin woke and asked for the archbishop and the curé. Aline told her that they were in the room engaged in prayer for her. With a sign she dismissed her mother and the maid, and beckoned the two priests to her bed.

"Nothing of what I shall say is unknown to you, my lord, nor to you, M. le Curé. You, my lord archbishop, were the first to look into my conscience; at a glance you read almost the whole past, and that which you saw was enough for you. My confessor, an angel sent by heaven to be near me, knows something more; I have confessed all to him, as in duty bound. And now I wish to consult you—whose minds are enlightened by the spirit of the church; I want to ask you how such a woman as I should take leave of this life as a true Christian. You, spirits holy and austere, do you think that if heaven vouchsafes pardon to the most complete and profound repentance ever made by a guilty soul, I shall have accomplished my whole task here on earth?"

"Yes; yes, my daughter," said the archbishop.

"No, my father, no!" she cried, sitting upright, and lightnings flashed from her eyes. "Yonder lies an unhappy man in his grave, not many steps away, under the sole weight of a hideous crime; here, in this sumptuous house, there is a woman crowned with the aureola of good deeds and a virtuous life. They bless the woman; they curse him, poor boy. On the criminal they heap execrations, I enjoy the good opinion of all; yet most of the blame of his crime is mine, and a great part of the good for which they praise me so and are grateful to me is his; cheat that I am! I have the credit of it, and he, a martyr to his loyalty to me, is covered with shame. In a few hours I shall die, and a whole canton will weep for me, a whole department will praise my good deeds, my piety, and my virtues; and he died reviled and scorned, a whole town crowding about to see him die, for hate of the murderer! You, my judges, are indulgent to me, but I hear

an imperious voice within me that will not let me rest. Ah! God's hand, more heavy than yours, has been laid upon me day by day, as if to warn me that all was not expiated yet. My sin shall be redeemed by public confession. Oh! he was happy, that criminal who went to a shameful death in the face of earth and heaven! But as for me, I cheated justice, and I am still a cheat! All the respect shown to me has been like mockery, not a word of praise but has scorched my heart like fire. And now the public prosecutor has come here. Do you not see that the will of heaven is in accordance with this voice that cries 'Confess?'"

Both priests, the prince of the church and the simple country parson, the two great luminaries, remained silent, and kept their eyes fixed on the ground. So deeply moved were the judges by the greatness and the submission of the sinner that they could not pass sentence. After a pause, the archbishop raised his noble face, thin and worn with the daily practice of austerity in a devout life.

"My child," he said, "you are going beyond the commandments of the church. It is the glory of the church that she adapts her dogmas to the conditions of life in every age; for the church is destined to make the pilgrimage of the centuries side by side with humanity. According to the decision of the church, private confession has replaced public confession. This substitution has made the new rule of life. The sufferings which you have endured suffice. Depart in peace. God has heard you indeed."

"But is not this wish of a criminal in accordance with the rule of the early church, which filled heaven with as many saints and martyrs and confessors as there are stars in heaven?" Véronique cried earnestly. "Who was it that wrote 'Confess your faults one to another?' Was it not one of our Saviour's own immediate disciples? Let me confess my shame publicly upon my knees. That will be an expiation of the wrong that I have done to the world, and to a family

exiled and almost extinct through my sin. The world should know that my good deeds are not an offering to God; that they are only the just payment of a debt—— Suppose that, when I am gone, some finger should raise the veil of lies that covers me?—— Oh, the thought of it brings the supreme hour nearer."

"I see calculation in this, my child," the archbishop said gravely. "There are still strong passions left in you; that which I deemed extinguished is——"

"My lord," she cried, breaking in upon the speaker, turning her fixed horror-stricken eyes on him, "I swear to you that my heart is purified so far as it may be in a guilty and repentant woman; there is no thought left in me now but the thought of God."

"Let us leave heaven's justice take its course, my lord," the curé said, in a softened voice. "I have opposed this idea for four years. It has caused the only differences of opinion which have risen between my penitent and me. I have seen the very depths of this soul; earth has no hold left there. When the tears, sighs, and contrition of fifteen years have buried a sin in which two beings shared, do not think that there is the least luxurious taint in the long and dreadful remorse. For a long while memory has ceased to mingle its flames in the most ardent repentance. Yes, many tears have quenched so great a fire. I will answer," he said, stretching his hand out above Mme. Graslin's head and raising his tear-filled eyes, "I will answer for the purity of this archangel's soul. I used once to see in this desire a thought of reparation to an absent family; it seems as if God Himself has sent one member of it here, through one of those accidents in which His guidance is unmistakably revealed."

Véronique took the curé's trembling hand and kissed it.

"You have often been harsh to me, dear pastor," she said; "and now, in this moment, I discover where your apostolic sweetness lay hidden. You," she said, turning to the arch-

bishop, "you, the supreme head of this corner of God's earthly kingdom, be my stay in this time of humiliation. I shall prostrate myself as the lowest of women; you will raise me, a forgiven soul, equal, it may be, with those who have never gone astray."

The archbishop was silent for a while, engaged, no doubt, in weighing the considerations visible to his eagle's glance.

"My lord," said the curé, "deadly blows have been aimed at religion. Will not this return to ancient customs, made necessary by the greatness both of the sin and the repentance, be a triumph which will redound to us?"

"They will say that we are fanatics! that we have insisted on this cruel scene!" and the archbishop fell once more to his meditations.

Just at that moment Horace Bianchon and Roubaud came in without knocking at the door. As it opened, Véronique saw her mother, her son, and all the servants kneeling in prayer. The curés of the two neighboring parishes had come to assist M. Bonnet; perhaps also to pay their respects to the great archbishop, in whom the church of France saw a cardinal-designate, hoping that some day the Sacred College might be enlightened by the advent of an intellect so thoroughly Gallican.

Horace Bianchon was about to start for Paris; he came to bid farewell to the dying lady, and to thank her for her munificence. He approached the bed slowly, guessing from the manner of the two priests that the inward wound which had caused the disease of the body was now under consideration. He took Véronique's hand, laid it on the bed, and felt her pulse. The deepest silence, the silence of the fields in a summer-night, added solemnity to the scene. Lights shone from the great drawing-room, beyond the folding doors, and fell upon the little company of kneeling figures, the curés only were seated, reading their breviaries. About the crimson bed

of state stood the archbishop, in his violet robes, the curé, and the two men of science.

"She is troubled even in death!" said Horace Bianchon. Like many men of great genius, he not seldom found grand words worthy of the scenes at which he was present.

The archbishop rose, as if goaded by some inward impulse. He called M. Bonnet, and went towards the door. They crossed the chamber and the drawing-room, and went out upon the terrace, where they walked up and down for a few minutes. As they came in after a consideration of this point of ecclesiastical discipline, Roubaud went to meet them.

"M. Bianchon sent me to tell you to be quick; Mme. Graslin is dying in strange agitation, which is not caused by the severe physical pain which she is suffering."

The archbishop hurried back, and in reply to Mme. Graslin's anxious eyes, he said, "You shall be satisfied."

Bianchon (still with his finger on the dying woman's wrist) made an involuntary start of surprise; he gave Roubaud a quick look, and then glanced at the priests.

"My lord, this body is no longer our province," he said, "your words brought life in the place of death. You make a miracle credible."

"Madame has been nothing but soul this long time past," said Roubaud, and Véronique thanked him by a glance.

A smile crossed her face as she lay there, and, with the smile that expressed the gladness of a completed expiation, the innocent look of the girl of eighteen returned to her. The appalling lines traced by inward tumult, the dark coloring, the livid patches, all the details that but lately had contributed a certain dreadful beauty to her face, all alterations of all kinds, in short, had vanished; to those who watched Véronique, it seemed as if she had been wearing a mask and had suddenly dropped it. The wonderful transfiguration by which the inward life and nature of this woman were made

visible in her features was wrought for the last time. Her whole being was purified and illuminated, her face might have caught a gleam from the flaming swords of the guardian angels about her. She looked once more as she used to look in Limoges when they called her "the little Virgin." The love of God manifestly was yet stronger in her than the guilty love had been; the earthly love had brought out all the forces of life in her; the love of God dispelled every trace of the inroads of death. A smothered cry was heard. La Sauviat appeared; she sprang to the bed. "So I see my child again at last!" she exclaimed.

Something in the old woman's accent as she uttered the two words, "my child," conjured up such visions of early childhood and its innocence, that those who watched by this heroic death-bed turned their heads away to hide their emotion. The great doctor took Mme. Graslin's hand, kissed it, and then went his way, and soon the sound of his departing carriage sent echoes over the countryside, spreading the tidings that he had no hope of saving the life of her who was the life of the country. The archbishop, curé, and doctor, and all who felt tired, went to take a little rest. Mme. Graslin herself slept for some hours. When she awoke the dawn was breaking; she asked them to open the windows, she would see her last sunrise.

At ten o'clock in the morning the archbishop, in pontifical vestments, came back to Mme. Graslin's room. Both he and M. Bonnet reposed such confidence in her that they made no recommendations as to the limits to be observed in her confession. Véronique saw other faces of other clergy, for some of the curés from neighboring parishes had come. The splendid ornaments which Mme. Graslin had presented to her beloved parish church lent splendor to the ceremony. Eight children, choristers in their red-and-white surplices, stood in a double row between the bed and the door of the great drawing-room, each of them holding one of the great candlesticks of gilded

bronze which Véronique had ordered from Paris. A white-haired sacristan on either side of the daïs held the banner of the church and the crucifix. The servants, in their devotion, had removed the wooden altar from the sacristy and erected it near the drawing-room door; it was decked and ready for the archbishop to say mass. Mme. Graslin was touched by an attention which the church pays only to crowned heads. The great folding-doors that gave access to the dining-room stood wide open, so that she could see the hall of the château filled with people; nearly all the village was there.

Her friends had seen to everything, none but the people of the house stood in the drawing-room; and before them, grouped about the door of her room, she saw her intimate friends and those whose discretion might be trusted. M. Grossetête, M. de Granville, Roubaud, Gérard, Clousier, and Ruffin stood foremost among these. All of them meant to stand upright when the time came, so that the dying woman's confession should not travel beyond them. Other things favored this design, for the sobs of those about her drowned her voice.

Two of these stood out dreadfully conspicuous among the rest. The first was Denise Tascheron. In her foreign dress, made with Quakerly simplicity, she was unrecognizable to any of the villagers who might have caught a glimpse of her. Not so for the public prosecutor; she was a figure that he was not likely to forget, and with her reappearance a dreadful light began to dawn on him. Now he had a glimpse of the truth, a suspicion of the part which he had played in Mme. Graslin's life, and then the whole truth flashed upon him. Less over-awed than the rest by the religious influence, the child of the nineteenth century, the man of law felt a cruel sensation of dismay; the whole drama of Véronique's inner life in the Hôtel Graslin during Tascheron's trial opened out before him. The whole of that tragic epoch reconstructed itself in his memory, lighted up by La Sauviat's eyes, which gleamed with

hate of him not ten paces away; those eyes seemed to direct a double stream of molten lead upon him. The old woman had forgiven him nothing. The impersonation of man's justice felt shudders run through his frame. He stood there heart-stricken and pallid, not daring to turn his eyes to the bed where the woman he had loved was lying, lived beneath the shadow of death's hand, drawing strength from the very magnitude of her offense to quell her agony. Vertigo seized on him as he saw Véronique's shrunken profile, a white outline in sharp relief against the crimson damask.

The mass began at eleven o'clock. When the curé of Vizay had read the epistle, the archbishop divested himself of his dalmatic, and took up his station in the doorway—

"Christians here assembled to witness the administration of extreme unction to the mistress of this house, you who are uniting your prayers to those of the church to make intercession with God for the salvation of her soul, learn that she thinks herself unworthy to receive the holy viaticum until she has made, for the edification of others, a public confession of her greatest sin. We withstood her pious desire, although this act of contrition was long in use in the church in the earliest Christian times; but as the afflicted woman tells us that the confession touches on the rehabilitation of an unhappy child of this parish, we leave her free to follow the inspirations of repentance."

After these words, spoken with the benign dignity of a shepherd of souls, the archbishop turned and gave place to Véronique. The dying woman was seen, supported by her mother and the curé, two great and venerable symbols: did she not owe her double existence to the earthly mother who had borne her, and to the church, the mother of her soul? Kneeling on a cushion, she clasped her hands and meditated for a moment to gather up and concentrate the strength to speak from some source derived from heaven. There was something unspeakably awful in that silent pause. No one

dared to look at his neighbor. All eyes were fixed on the ground. Yet when Véronique looked up, she met the public prosecutor's glance, and the expression of that white face sent the color to her own.

"I should not have died in peace," Véronique began, in a voice unlike her natural tone, "if I had left behind the false impression which each one of you who hears me speak has possibly formed of me. In me you see a great sinner, who beseeches your prayers, and seeks to merit pardon by the public confession of her sin. So deeply has she sinned, so fatal were the consequences of her guilt, that it may be that no repentance will redeem it. And yet the greater my humiliation on earth, the less, doubtless, have I to dread from God's anger in the heavenly kingdom whither I fain would go.

"It is nearly twenty years since my father, who had such great belief in me, recommended a son of this parish to my care; he had seen in him a wish to live rightly, aptitude, and an excellent disposition. This young man was the unhappy Jean-François Tascheron, who thenceforward attached himself to me as his benefactress. How was it that my affection for him became a guilty one? That explanation need not, I think, be required of me. Yet, perhaps, it might be thought that the purest possible motives were imperceptibly transformed by unheard-of self-sacrifice, by human frailty, by a host of causes which might seem to be extenuations of my guilt. But am I the less guilty because our noblest affections were my accomplices? I would rather admit, in spite of the barriers raised by the delicacy natural to our sex between me and the young man whom my father intrusted to me, that I, who by my education and social position might regard myself as his protegé's superior, listened, in an evil hour, to the voice of the tempter. I soon found that my maternal position brought me into contact with him so close that I could not but be sensible of his mute and delicate admiration. He was the first and only creature to appreciate me at my just value.

Perhaps, too, I myself was led astray by unworthy considerations. I thought that I could trust to the discretion of a young man who owed everything to me, whom chance had placed so far below me, albeit by birth we were equals. In fact, I found a cloak to screen my conduct in my name for charity and good deeds. Alas! (and this is one of my worst sins) I hid my passion in the shadow of the altar. I made everything conduce to the miserable triumph of a mad passion, the most irreproachable actions, my love for my mother, acts of a devotion that was very real and sincere and through so many errors—all these things were so many links in a chain that bound me. My poor mother, whom I love so much, who hears me even now, was unwittingly and for a long while my accomplice. When her eyes were opened, I was too deeply committed to my dangerous way, and she found strength to keep my secret in the depths of her mother heart. Silence in her has thus become the loftiest of virtues. Love for her daughter overcame the love of God. Ah! now I solemnly relieve her of the load of secrecy which she has carried. She shall end her days with no lie in her eyes and brow. May her motherhood absolve her, may her noble and sacred old age, crowned with virtues, shine forth in all its radiance, now that the link which bound her indirectly to touch such infamy is severed——"

Here Véronique's sobs interrupted her words; Aline made her inhale salts.

"Only one other has hitherto been in this secret, the faithful servant who does me this last service; she has, at least, feigned not to know what she must have known, but she has been in the secret of the austerities by which I have broken this weak flesh. So I ask pardon of the world for having lived a lie, drawn into that lie by the remorseless logic of the world.

"Jean-François Tascheron is not as guilty as men may have thought him. Oh, all you who hear me! I beg of you to

remember how young he was, and that his frenzy was caused at least as much by the remorse which seized on *me*, as by the spell of an involuntary attraction. And more, far more, do not forget that it was a sense of honor, if a mistaken sense of honor, which caused the greatest disaster of all. Neither of us could endure that life of continual deceits. He turned from them to my own greatness, and, unhappy that he was, sought to make our fatal love as little of a humiliation as might be to me. So I was the cause of his crime. Driven by necessity, the unhappy man, hitherto only guilty of too great a love for his idol, chose of all evil actions the one most irreparable. I knew nothing of it until the very moment when the deed was done. Even as it was being carried out, God overturned the whole fabric of crooked designs. I heard cries that ring even yet in my ears, and went into the house again. I knew that it was a struggle for life and death, and that I, the object of this mad endeavor, was powerless to interfere. For Tascheron was mad; I bear witness that he was mad! ——"

Here Véronique looked at the public prosecutor, and a deep audible sigh came from Denise.

"He lost his head when he saw his happiness (so he believed it to be) destroyed by unforeseen circumstances. Love led him astray, then fate dragged him from a misdemeanor to a crime, and from a crime to a double murder. At any rate, when he left my mother's house he was an innocent man; when he returned, he was a murderer. I, and I only in the world, knew that the crime was not premeditated, nor accompanied by the aggravating circumstances which brought the sentence of death on him. A hundred times I determined to give myself up to save him, and a hundred times a terrible but necessary heroism outweighed all other considerations, and the words died on my lips. Surely my presence a few steps away must have contributed to give him the hateful, base, cowardly courage of a murderer. If he had been

alone, he would have fled—— It was I who had formed his nature, who had given him loftier thoughts and a greater heart; I knew him; he was incapable of anything cowardly or base. Do justice to the innocent hand, do justice to him! God in His mercy lets him sleep in the grave that you, guessing doubtless, the real truth, have watered with your tears! Punish and curse the guilty thing here before you! When once the deed was done, I was horror-struck; I did all that I could to hide it. My father had left a charge to me, a childless woman; I was to bring one child of God's family to God, and I brought him to the scaffold—— Oh, heap all your reproaches upon me! The hour has come!"

Her eyes glittered with fierce pride as she spoke. The archbishop, standing behind her, with his pastoral cross held out above her head, no longer maintained his impassive attitude; he covered his eyes with his right hand, A smothered sound like a dying groan broke the silence, and two men—Gérard and Roubaud—caught Denise Tascheron in their arms. She had swooned away. The fire died down in Véronique's eyes; she looked troubled, but the martyr's serenity soon returned to her face.

"I deserve no praise, no blessings, for my conduct here, as you know now," she said. "In the sight of heaven I have led a life full of sharp penance, hidden from all other eyes, and heaven will value it at its just worth. My outward life has been a vast reparation of the evil that I have wrought; I have engraved my repentance in characters ineffaceable upon this wide land, a record that will last for ever. It is written everywhere in the fields grown green, in the growing township, in the mountain streams turned from their courses into the plain, once wild and barren, now fertile and productive. Not a tree shall be felled here for a century but the peasants will tell the tale of the remorse to which they owe its shade. In these ways the repentant spirit which should have inspired a long and useful life will still make its influence felt among

you for a long time to come. All that you should have owed to *his* talents and a fortune honorably acquired has been done for you by the executrix of his repentance, by her who caused his crime. All the wrong done socially has been repaired ; I have taken upon myself the work of a life cut short in its flower, the life intrusted to my guidance, the life for which I must shortly give an account——"

Here once more the burning eyes were quenched in tears. She paused.

"There is one among those present," she continued, "whom I have hated with a hate which I thought must be eternal, simply because he did no more than his duty. He was the first instrument of my punishment. I was too close to the deed, my feet were dipped too deep in blood, I was bound to hate justice. I knew that there was a trace of evil passion in my heart, so long as that spark of anger should trouble it; I have had nothing to forgive, I have simply purged the corner where the evil one lurked. Whatever the victory cost, it is complete."

The public prosecutor turned a tear-stained face to Véronique. It was as if man's justice was remorseful in him. Véronique, turning her face away to continue her story, met the eyes of an old friend ; Grossetête, bathed in tears, stretched out his hands entreatingly towards her. "It is enough ! " he seemed to say. The heroic woman heard such a chorus of sobs about her, received so much sympathy, that she broke down ; the balm of the general forgiveness was too much, weakness overcame her. Seeing that the sources of her daughter's strength were exhausted, the old mother seemed to find in herself the vigor of a young woman ; she héld out her arms to carry Véronique.

"Christians," said the archbishop, "you have heard the penitent's confession ; it confirms the decree of man's justice ; it may lay all scruples and anxiety on that score to rest. In this confession you should find new reasons for uniting your

prayers to those of the church, which offers to God the holy sacrifice of the mass to implore His mercy for the sinner after so grand a repentance."

The office was finished. Véronique followed all that was said with an expression of such inward peace that she no longer seemed to be the same woman. Her face wore a look of frank innocence, such as it might have worn in the days when, a pure and ingenuous girl, she dwelt under her father's roof. Her brows grew white in the dawn of eternity, her face glowed golden in the light of heaven. Doubtless she caught something of its mystic harmonies; and in her longing to be made one with God on earth for the last time, she exerted all her powers of vitality to live. M. Bonnet came to the bedside and gave her absolution; the archbishop anointed her with the holy oil, with a fatherly tenderness that revealed to those who stood about how dear he held this sheep that had been lost and was found. With that holy anointing the eyes that had wrought such mischief on earth were closed to the things of earth, the seal of the church was set on those two eloquent lips, and the ears that had listened to the inspiration of evil were closed for ever. All the senses, mortified by penitence, were thus sanctified; the spirit of evil could have no power over this soul.

Never had all the grandeur and deep meaning of a sacrament been apprehended more thoroughly than by those who saw the church's care thus justified by the dying woman's confession. After that preparation, Véronique received the body of Christ with a look of hope and joy that melted the icy barrier of unbelief at which the curé had so often knocked in vain. Roubaud, confounded, became a Catholic from that moment.

Awful as the scene was, it was no less touching; and in its solemnity, as of the culminating-point of a drama, it might have given some painter the subject of a masterpiece. When the mournful episode was over, and the words of the Gospel

of St. John fell on the ears of the dying woman, she beckoned to her mother to bring Francis back again. (The tutor had taken the boy out of the room.) When Francis knelt on the step by the bedside, the mother whose sins had been forgiven felt free to lay her hands in blessing on his head, and so she drew her last breath, La Sauviat standing at the post she had filled for twenty years, faithful to the end. It was she, a heroine after her manner, who closed the eyes of the daughter who had suffered so much, and laid a kiss on them.

Then all the priests and assistants came round the bed, and intoned the dread chant *De profundis* by the light of the flaming torches; and from those sounds the people of the whole countryside kneeling without, together with the friends and all the servants praying in the hall, knew that the mother of the canton had passed away. Groans and sobs mingled with the chanting. The noble woman's confession had not passed beyond the threshold of the drawing-room; it had reached none but friendly ears. When the peasants came from Montégnac, and all the district round about came in, each with a green spray, to bid their benefactress a supreme farewell mingled with tears and prayers, they saw a representative of man's justice, bowed down with anguish, holding the cold hand of the woman to whom all unwittingly he had meted out such a cruel but just punishment.

Two days later and the public prosecutor, with Grossetête, the archbishop, and the mayor, bore the pall when Mme. Graslin was carried to her last resting-place. Amid deep silence they laid her in the grave; no one uttered a word, for no one had the heart to speak, and all eyes were full of tears.

"She is a saint!" Everywhere the words were repeated along the roads which she had made, in the canton which owed its prosperity to her. It was as if the words were sown abroad across her fields to quicken the life in them. It struck nobody as a strange thing that Mme. Graslin should be buried beside Jean-François Tascheron. She had not asked this;

but a trace of pitying tenderness in the old mother prompted her to bid the sacristan put those together whom earth had separated by a violent death, whom one repentance should unite in purgatory.

Mme. Graslin's will fulfilled all expectations. She founded scholarships in the school at Limoges, and beds in the hospital, intended for the working classes only. A considerable sum (three hundred thousand francs in a period of six years) was left to purchase that part of the village called "Tascheron's," and for building an almshouse there. It was to serve as an asylum for the sick and aged poor of the district, a lying-in hospital for destitute women, and a home for foundling children, and was to be known by the name of Tascheron's Almshouse. Véronique directed that it was to be placed in the charge of the Franciscan Sisters, and fixed the salary of the head physician and house surgeon at four thousand francs. Mme. Graslin begged Roubaud to be the first head physician, and to superintend the execution of the sanitary arrangements and plans to be made by the architect, M. Gérard. She also endowed the commune of Montégnac with sufficient land to pay the taxes. A certain fund was put in the hands of the church to be used as determined in some exceptional cases; for the church was to be the guardian of the young; and if any of the children in Montégnac should show a special aptitude for art or science or industrial pursuits, the far-sighted benevolence of the testatrix provided thus for their encouragement.

The tidings of her death were received as the news of a calamity to the whole country, and no word that reflected on her memory went with it.

Gérard, appointed Francis Graslin's guardian, was required by the terms of the will to live at the château, and thither he went; but not until three months after Véronique's death did he marry Denise Tascheron, in whom Francis found, as it were, a second mother.

ALBERT SAVARON

(*de Savarus*).

To Madame Emile Girardin.

One of the few drawing-rooms where, under the Restoration, the archbishop of Besançon was sometimes to be seen, was that of the Baronne de Watteville, to whom he was particularly attached on account of her religious sentiments.

A word as to this lady, the most important lady of Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the most successful and illustrious of murderers and renegades—his extraordinary adventures are too much a part of history to be related here—this nineteenth-century Monsieur de Watteville was as gentle and peaceable as his ancestor of the *Grand Siècle* had been passionate and turbulent. After living in the *Comté** like a wood-louse in the crack of a wainscot, he had married the heiress of the celebrated house of Rupt. Mademoiselle de Rupt brought twenty thousand francs a year in the funds to add to the ten thousand francs a year in real estate of the Baron de Watteville. The Swiss gentleman's coat-of-arms (the Wattevilles are Swiss) was then borne as an escutcheon of pretense on the old shield of the Rupts. The marriage, arranged in 1802, was solemnized in 1815 after the second Restoration. Within three years of the birth of a daughter all Madame de Watteville's grandparents were dead and their estates wound up. Monsieur de Watteville's house was then sold, and they settled in the Rue de la Préfecture in the fine old mansion of the Rupts, with an immense garden stretching to the Rue du Perron. Madame de Watte-

* La Franche Comté.

ville, devout as a girl, became even more so after her marriage. She was one of the queens of the saintly brotherhood which gives the upper circles of Besançon a solemn air and prudish manners in harmony with the character of the town.

Monsieur le Baron de Watteville, a dry, lean man, devoid of intelligence, looked worn out without any one knowing whereby, for he enjoyed the profoundest ignorance; but as his wife was a red-haired woman, and of a stern nature that became proverbial (we still say "as sharp as Madame de Watteville") some wits of the legal profession declared that he had been worn against that rock—*Rupt* is obviously derived from *rupes*. Scientific students of social phenomena will not fail to have observed that Rosalie was the only offspring of the union between the Wattevilles and the Rupts.

Monsieur de Watteville spent his existence in a handsome workshop with a lathe; he was a turner! As subsidiary to this pursuit, he took up a fancy for making collections. Philosophical doctors, devoted to the study of madness, regard this tendency toward collecting as a first degree of mental aberration when it is set on small things. The Baron de Watteville treasured shells and geological fragments of the neighborhood of Besançon. Some contradictory folk, especially women, would say of Monsieur de Watteville, "He has a noble soul! He perceived from the first days of his married life that he would never be his wife's master, so he threw himself into a mechanical occupation and good living."

The house of the Rupts was not devoid of a certain magnificence worthy of Louis XIV., and bore traces of the nobility of the two families who had mingled in 1815. The chandeliers of glass cut in the shape of leaves, the brocades, the damask, the carpets, the gilt furniture, were all in harmony with the old liveries and the old servants. Though served in blackened family plate, round a looking-glass tray furnished with Dresden china, the food was exquisite. The wines selected by Monsieur de Watteville, who, to occupy his time and vary his

employments, was his own butler, enjoyed a sort of fame throughout the department. Madame de Watteville's fortune was a fine one; while her husband's, which consisted only of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand francs a year, was not increased by inheritance. It is needless to add that in consequence of Madame de Watteville's close intimacy with the archbishop, the three or four clever or remarkable abbés of the diocese who were not averse to good féeding were very much at home at her house.

At a ceremonial dinner given in honor of I know not whose wedding, at the beginning of September, 1834, when the women were standing in a circle round the drawing-room fire, and the men in groups by the windows, every one exclaimed with pleasure at the entrance of Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, who was announced.

"Well, and the lawsuit?" they all cried.

"Won!" replied the vicar-general. "The verdict of the court, from which we had no hope, you know why——"

This was an allusion to the members of the First Court of Appeal of 1830; the Legitimists had almost all withdrawn.

"The verdict is in our favor on every point, and reverses the decision of the lower court."

"Everybody thought you were done for."

"And we should have been, but for me. I told our advocate to be off to Paris, and at the crucial moment I was able to secure a new pleader, to whom we owe our victory, a wonderful man——"

"At Besançon?" said Monsieur de Watteville, guilelessly.

"At Besançon," replied the Abbé de Grancey.

"Oh yes, Savaron," said a handsome young man sitting near the Baroness, and named de Soulas.

"He spent five or six nights over it; he devoured documents and briefs; he had seven or eight interviews of several hours with me," continued Monsieur de Grancey, who had just reappeared at the Hôtel de Rupt for the first time in

three weeks. "In short, Monsieur Savaron has just completely beaten the celebrated lawyer whom our adversaries had sent for from Paris. This young man is wonderful, the bigwigs say. Thus the chapter is twice victorious; it has triumphed in law and also in politics, since it has vanquished Liberalism in the person of the counsel of our municipality. 'Our adversaries,' so our advocate said, 'must not expect to find readiness on all sides to ruin the archbishoprics.' The president was obliged to enforce silence. All the townsfolk of Besançon applauded. Thus the possession of the buildings of the old convent remains with the Chapter of the Cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savaron, however, invited his Parisian opponent to dine with him as they came out of court. He accepted, saying, 'Honor to every conqueror,' and complimented him on his success without bitterness."

"And where did you unearth this lawyer?" said Madame de Watteville. "I never heard his name before."

"Why, you can see his windows from here," replied the vicar-general. "Monsieur Savaron lives in the Rue du Perron; the garden of his house joins on to yours."

"But he is not a native of the county," said Monsieur de Watteville.

"So little is he a native of any place, that no one knows where he comes from," said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"But who is he?" asked Madame de Watteville, taking the abbé's arm to go into the dining-room. "If he is a stranger, by what chance has he settled at Besançon? It is a strange fancy for a barrister."

"Very strange!" echoed Amédée de Soulas, whose biography is here necessary to the understanding of this tale.

In all ages France and England have carried on an exchange of trifles, which is all the more constant because it evades the tyranny of the custom-house. The fashion that is called English in Paris is called French in London, and this

is reciprocal. The hostility of the two nations is suspended on two points—the uses of words and the fashion of dress. "God save the King," the national air of England, is a tune written by Lulli for the chorus of "Esther" or of "Athalie." Hoops, introduced at Paris by an Englishwoman, were invented in London, it is known why, by a Frenchwoman, the notorious Duchess of Portsmouth. They were at first so jeered at that the first Englishwoman who appeared in them at the Tuileries narrowly escaped being crushed by the crowd; but they were adopted. This fashion tyrannized over the ladies of Europe for half a century. At the peace of 1815, for a year, the long waists of the English were a standing jest; all Paris went to see Pothier and Brunet in "The Funny Englishwomen;" but in 1816 and 1817 the belt of the Frenchwoman, which in 1814 cut her across the bosom, gradually descended till it reached the hips.

Within ten years England has made two little gifts to our language. The *Incroyable*, the *Merveilleux*, the *Élégant*, the three successors of the *petit-maître* of discreditable etymology, have made way for the "dandy" and the "lion." The *lion* is not the parent of the *lionne*. The *lionne* is due to the famous song by Alfred de Musset—

"Have you seen in Barcelona

. . . . .

She that is my mistress and my lionne."

There has been a fusion—or, if you prefer it, a confusion—of the two words and the leading ideas. When an absurdity can amuse Paris, which devours as many masterpieces as absurdities, the provinces can hardly be deprived of them. So, as soon as the *lion* paraded Paris with his mane, his beard and mustaches, his waistcoats and his eyeglass, maintained in its place, without the help of his hands, by the contraction of his cheek and eye-socket, the chief towns of some departments had their sub-lions, who protested by the smartness of

their trousers-straps against the untidiness of their fellow-townsmen.

Thus, in 1834, Besançon could boast of a *lion*, in the person of Monsieur Amédée-Sylvain de Soulas, spelt Souleyas at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is, perhaps, the only man in Besançon descended from a Spanish family. Spain sent men to manage her business in the Comté, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulas remained in consequence of their connection with Cardinal Granvelle.

Young Monsieur de Soulas was always talking of leaving Besançon, a dull town, church-going, and not literary, a military centre and garrison town, of which the manners and customs and physiognomy are worth describing. This opinion allowed of his lodging, like a man uncertain of the future, in three very scantily furnished rooms at the end of the Rue Neuve, just where it opens into the Rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not possibly live without a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a small servant aged fourteen, thick-set, and named Babylas. The lion dressed his tiger very smartly—a short tunic coat of iron-gray cloth, belted with patent leather, bright blue plush breeches, a red waistcoat, polished leather top-boots, a shiny hat with black lacing, and brass buttons with the arms of Soulas. Amédée gave this boy white cotton gloves and his washing, and thirty-six francs a month to keep himself—a sum that seemed enormous to the grisettes of Besançon: four hundred and twenty francs a year to a child of fifteen, without counting extras! The extras consisted in the price for which he could sell his turned clothes, a present when Soulas exchanged one of his horses, and the perquisite of the manure. The two horses, treated with sordid economy, cost, one with another, eight hundred a year. His bills for articles received from Paris, such as perfumery, cravats, jewelry, patent blacking, and clothes, ran to another twelve hundred francs. Add

to this the groom, or tiger, the horses, a very superior style of dress, and six hundred francs a year for rent, and you will see a grand total of three thousand francs.

Now, Monsieur de Soulas' father had left him only four thousand francs a year, the income from some cottage farms in rather bad repair, which required keeping up, a charge which lent painful uncertainty to the rents. The lion had hardly three francs a day left for food, amusements, and gambling. He very often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was positively obliged to dine at his own cost, he sent his tiger to bring a couple of dishes from a cook-shop, never spending more than twenty-five sous.

Young Monsieur de Soulas was supposed to be a spendthrift, recklessly extravagant, whereas the poor man made the two ends meet in the year with a keenness and skill which would have done honor to a thrifty housewife. At Besançon in those days no one knew how great a tax on a man's capital were six francs spent in polish to spread on his boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous a pair, cleaned in the deepest secrecy to make them three times renewed, cravats costing ten francs, and lasting three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers fitting close to the boots. How could he do otherwise, since we see women in Paris bestowing their special attention on simpletons who visit them, and cut out the most remarkable men by means of these frivolous advantages, which a man can buy for fifteen louis, and get his hair curled and a fine linen shirt into the bargain?

If this unhappy youth should seem to you to have become a *lion* on very cheap terms, you must know that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland, by coach and in short stages, twice to Paris, and once from Paris to England. He passed as a well-informed traveler, and could say, "In England, where I went——" The dowagers of the town would say to him, "You, who have been in England——"

He had been as far as Lombardy, and seen the shores of the Italian lakes. He read new books. Finally, when he was cleaning his gloves, the tiger Babylas replied to callers, "Monsieur is very busy." An attempt had been made to withdraw Monsieur Amédée de Soulas from circulation by pronouncing him "A man of advanced ideas." Amédée had the gift of uttering with the gravity of a native the commonplaces that were in fashion, which gave him the credit of being one of the most enlightened of the nobility. His person was garnished with fashionable trinkets, and his head furnished with ideas hall-marked by the press.

In 1834 Amédée was a young man of five-and-twenty, of medium height, dark, with a very prominent thorax, well-made shoulders, rather plump legs, feet already fat, white dimpled hands, a beard under his chin, mustaches worthy of the garrison, a good-natured, fat, rubicund face, a flat nose, and brown expressionless eyes; nothing Spanish about him. He was progressing rapidly in the direction of obesity, which would be fatal to his pretensions. His nails were well kept, his beard trimmed, the smallest details of his dress attended to with English precision. Hence Amédée de Soulas was looked upon as the finest man in Besançon. A hairdresser who waited upon him at a fixed hour—another luxury, costing sixty francs a year—held him up as the sovereign authority in matters of fashion and elegance.

Amédée slept late, dressed and went out towards noon, to go to one of his farms and practice pistol-shooting. He attached as much importance to this exercise as Lord Byron did in his later days. Then at three o'clock he came home, admired on horseback by the grisettes and the ladies who happened to be at their windows. After an affectation of study or business, which seemed to engage him till four, he dressed to dine out, spent the evening in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy of Besançon playing whist, and went home to bed at eleven. No life could be more above-board, more

prudent, or more irreproachable, for he punctually attended the services at church on Sundays and holy days.

To enable you to understand how exceptional is such a life, it is necessary to devote a few words to an account of Besançon. No town ever offered more deaf and dumb resistance to progress. At Besançon the officials, the employes, the military, in short, every one engaged in governing it, sent thither from Paris to fill a post of any kind, are all spoken of by the expressive general name of "The Colony." The colony is neutral ground, the only ground where, as in church, the upper rank and the townsfolk of the place can meet. Here, fired by a word, a look, or gesture, are started those feuds between house and house, between a woman of rank and a citizen's wife, which endure till death, and widen the impassable gulf which parts the two classes of society. With the exception of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, the Beauffremont, the de Scey, and the Gramont families, with a few others who come only to stay on their estates in the Comté, the aristocracy of Besançon dates no further back than a couple of centuries, the time of the conquest by Louis XIV. This little world is essentially of the *parlement*, and arrogant, stiff, solemn, uncompromising, haughty beyond all comparison, even with the Court of Vienna, for in this the nobility of Besançon would put the Viennese drawing-rooms to shame. As to Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the town, they are never mentioned, no one thinks about them. The marriages in these families are arranged in the cradle, so rigidly are the greatest things settled as well as the smallest. No stranger, no intruder, ever finds his way into one of these houses, and to obtain an introduction for the colonels or officers of title belonging to the first families in France when quartered there requires efforts of diplomacy which Prince Talleyrand would gladly have mastered to use at a congress.

In 1834 Amédée was the only man in Besançon who wore trousers-straps; this will account for the young man's being

regarded as a lion. And a little anecdote will enable you to understand the city of Besançon.

Some time before the opening of this story, the need arose at the préfecture for bringing an editor from Paris for the official newspaper, to enable it to hold its own against the little *Gazette*, dropped at Besançon by the great *Gazette*, and the *Patriot*, which frisked in the hands of the Republicans. Paris sent them a young man, knowing nothing about la Franche Comté, who began by writing them a leading article of the school of the *Charivari*. The chief of the moderate party, a member of the municipal council, sent for the journalist and said to him, "You must understand, monsieur, that we are serious, more than serious—tiresome; we resent being amused, and are furious at having been made to laugh. Be as hard of digestion as the toughest disquisitions in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and you will hardly reach the level of Besançon."

The editor took the hint, and thenceforth spoke the most incomprehensible philosophical lingo. His success was complete.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not fall in the esteem of Besançon society, it was out of pure vanity on its part; the aristocracy were happy to affect a modern air, and to be able to show any Parisians of rank who visited the Comté a young man who bore some likeness to them.

All this hidden labor, all this dust thrown in people's eyes, this display of folly and latent prudence, had an object, or the *lion* of Besançon would have been no son of the soil. Amédée wanted to achieve a good marriage by proving some day that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had some savings. He wanted to be the talk of the town, to be the finest and best-dressed man there, in order to win first the attention, and then the hand, of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, at the time when young Monsieur de Soulas was setting up in business as a dandy, Rosalie was but fourteen.

Hence, in 1834, Mademoiselle de Watteville had reached the age when young persons are easily struck by the peculiarities which attracted the attention of the town to Amédée. There are many *lions* who become *lions* out of self-interest and speculation. The Wattevilles, who for twelve years had been drawing an income of fifty thousand francs, did not spend more than four-and-twenty thousand francs a year, while receiving all the upper circle of Besançon every Monday and Friday. On Monday they gave a dinner, on Friday an evening party. Thus, in twelve years, what a sum must have accumulated from twenty-six thousand francs a year, saved and invested with the judgment that distinguishes those old families! It was very generally supposed that Madame de Watteville, thinking she had land enough, had placed her savings in the three per cents., in 1830. Rosalie's dowry would therefore, as the best informed opined, amount to about twenty thousand francs a year. So for the last five years Amédée had worked like a mole to get into the highest favor of the severe Baroness, while laying himself out to flatter Mademoiselle de Watteville's conceit.

Madame de Watteville was in the secret of the devices by which Amédée succeeded in keeping up his rank in Besançon, and esteemed him highly for it. Soulas had placed himself under her wing when she was thirty, and at that time had dared to admire her and make her his idol; he had got so far as to be allowed—he alone in the world—to pour out to her all the unseemly gossip which almost all very precise women love to hear, being authorized by their superior virtue to look into the gulf without falling, and into the devil's snares without being caught. Do you understand why the lion did not allow himself the very smallest intrigue? He lived a public life, in the street so to speak, on purpose to play the part of a lover sacrificed to duty by the Baroness, and to feast her mind with the sins she had forbidden to her senses. A man who is so privileged as to be allowed to pour light stories into the ear of

a bigot is in her eyes a charming man. If this exemplary youth had better known the human heart, he might without risk have allowed himself some flirtations among the grisettes of Besançon who looked up to him as a king; his affairs might perhaps have been all the more hopeful with the strict and prudish Baroness. To Rosalie our Cato affected prodigality; he professed a life of elegance, showing her in perspective the splendid part played by a woman of fashion in Paris, whither he meant to go as Deputé.

All these manœuvres were crowned with complete success. In 1834 the mothers of the forty noble families composing the high society of Besançon quoted Monsieur Amédée de Soulas as the most charming young man in the town; no one would have dared to dispute his place as cock of the walk at the Hôtel de Rupt, and all Besançon regarded him as Rosalie de Watteville's future husband. There had even been some exchange of ideas on the subject between the Baroness and Amédée, to which the Baron's apparent nonentity gave some certainty.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, to whom her enormous prospective fortune at that time lent considerable importance, had been brought up exclusively within the precincts of the Hôtel de Rupt—which her mother rarely quitted, so devoted was she to her dear archbishop—and severely repressed by an exclusively religious education, and by her mother's despotism, which held her rigidly to principles. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. It is knowledge to have learned geography from Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France, and the four rules, all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit? Dancing and music were forbidden, as being more likely to corrupt life than to grace it. The Baroness taught her daughter every conceivable stitch in tapestry and women's work—plain sewing, embroidery, knitting. At seventeen Rosalie had never read anything but the "Lettres édifiantes," and some works on heraldry. No newspaper had ever defiled her sight. She attended mass at the Cathedral

every morning, taken there by her mother, came back to breakfast, did needlework after a little walk in the garden, and received visitors, sitting with the Baroness until dinner-time. Then, after dinner, excepting on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to other houses to spend the evening, without being allowed to talk more than the maternal rule permitted.

At eighteen Mademoiselle de Watteville was a slight, thin girl with a flat figure, fair, colorless, and insignificant to the last degree. Her eyes, of a very light blue, borrowed beauty from their lashes, which, when downcast, threw a shadow on her cheeks. A few freckles marred the whiteness of her forehead, which was shapely enough. Her face was exactly like those of Albert Dürer's saints, or those of the painters before Perugino; the same plump, though slender modeling, the same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, the same severe guilelessness. Everything about her, even to her attitude, was suggestive of those virgins, whose beauty is only revealed in its mystical radiance to the eyes of the studious connoisseur. She had fine hands though red, and a pretty foot, the foot of an aristocrat.

She habitually wore simple checked cotton dresses; but on Sundays and in the evenings her mother allowed her silk. The cut of her frocks, made at Besançon, also made her ugly, while her mother tried to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from Paris fashions; for through Monsieur de Soulas she procured the smallest trifles of her dress from there. Rosalie had never worn a pair of silk stockings or thin boots, but always cotton stockings and leather shoes. On high days she was dressed in a muslin frock, her hair plainly dressed, and had bronze kid shoes.

This education, and her own modest demeanor, hid in Rosalie a spirit of iron. Physiologists and profound observers will tell you, perhaps to your great astonishment, that tempers, characteristics, wit, or genius reappear in families at long

intervals, precisely like what are known as hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes skips over two generations. We have an illustrious example of this phenomenon in George Sand, in whom are resuscitated the force, the power, and the imaginative faculty of the Maréchal de Saxe, whose natural granddaughter she is.

The decisive character and romantic daring of the famous Watteville had reappeared in the soul of his grand-niece, reinforced by the tenacity and pride of blood of the Rupts. But these qualities—or faults, if you will have it so—were as deeply buried in this young girlish soul, apparently so weak and yielding, as the seething lavas within a hill before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone, perhaps, suspected this inheritance from two strains. She was so severe to her Rosalie that she replied one day to the archbishop, who blamed her for being too hard on the child, "Leave me to manage her, monseigneur. I know her! She has more than one Beelzebub in her skin!"

The Baroness kept all the keener watch over her daughter, because she considered her honor as a mother to be at stake. After all, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, at this time five-and-thirty, and as good as widowed, with a husband who turned egg-cups in every variety of wood, who set his mind on making wheels with six spokes out of iron-wood, and manufactured snuff-boxes for every one of his acquaintance, flirted in strict propriety with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was in the house, she alternately dismissed and recalled her daughter, and tried to detect symptoms of jealousy in that youthful soul, so as to have occasion to repress them. She imitated the police in its dealings with the Republicans; but she labored in vain. Rosalie showed no symptoms of rebellion. Then the arid bigot accused her daughter of perfect insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be sure that if she had thought young Monsieur de Soulas *nice*, she would have drawn down

on herself a smart reproof. Thus, to all her mother's incitement she replied merely by such phrases as are wrongly called Jesuitical—wrongly, because the Jesuits were strong, and such reservations are the spiked wall behind which weakness takes refuge. Then the mother regarded the girl as a dissembler. If by mischance a spark of the true nature of the Watteville and the Rupts blazed out, the mother armed herself with the respect due from children to their parents to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience.

This covert battle was carried on in the most secret seclusion of domestic life, with closed doors. The vicar-general, the dear Abbé Grancey, the friend of the late archbishop, clever as he was in his capacity of the chief Father Confessor of the diocese, could not discover whether the struggle had stirred up some hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother was jealous in anticipation, or whether the court Amédée was paying to the girl through her mother had not overstepped its due limits. Being a friend of the family, neither mother nor daughter confessed to him. Rosalie, a little too much harried, morally, about young de Soulas, could not abide him, to use a homely phrase, and when he spoke to her, trying to take her heart by surprise, she received him but coldly. This aversion, discerned only by her mother's eye, was a constant subject of admonition.

"Rosalie, I cannot imagine why you affect such coldness towards Amédée. Is it because he is a friend of the family, and because we like him—your father and I?"

"Well, mamma," replied the poor child one day, "if I made him welcome, should I not be still more in the wrong?"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Madame de Watteville. "What is the meaning of such words? Your mother is unjust, no doubt, and, according to you, would be so in any case! Never let such an answer pass your lips again to your mother——" and so forth.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters. Rosalie

noted the time. Her mother, pale with fury, sent her to her room, where Rosalie pondered on the meaning of this scene without discovering it, so guileless was she. Thus young Monsieur de Soulas, who was supposed by every one to be very near the end he was aiming at, all neckcloths set, and by dint of pots of patent blacking—an end which required so much waxing of his mustaches, so many smart waistcoats, wore out so many horseshoes and stays—for he wore a leather vest, the stays of the *lion*—Amédée, I say, was farther away than any chance comer, although he had on his side the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey.

"Madame," said Monsieur de Soulas, addressing the Baroness, while waiting till his soup was cool enough to swallow, and affecting to give a romantic turn to his narrative, "one fine morning the mail-coach dropped at the Hôtel National a gentleman from Paris, who, after seeking apartments, made up his mind in favor of the first floor in Mademoiselle Galard's house, Rue du Perron. Then the stranger went straight to the Mairie, and had himself registered as a resident with all political qualifications. Finally, he had his name entered on the list of barristers to the court, showing his title in due form, and he left his card on all his new colleagues, the ministerial officials, the councilors of the court and the members of the bench, with the name, 'ALBERT SAVARON.'"

"The name of Savaron is famous," said Mademoiselle de Watteville, who was strong in heraldic information. "The Savarons of Savarus are one of the oldest, noblest, and richest families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman, and no man's son," replied Amédée de Soulas. "If he wishes to bear the arms of the Savarons of Savarus, he must add a bar-sinister. There is no one left of the Brabant family but a Mademoiselle de Savarus, a rich heiress, and unmarried."

"The bar-sinister is, of course, the badge of a bastard;

but the bastard of a Comte de Savarus is noble," answered Rosalie.

"Enough, that will do, mademoiselle!" said the Baroness.

"You insisted on her learning heraldry," said Monsieur de Watteville, "and she knows it very well."

"Go on, I beg, Monsieur de Soulas."

"You may suppose that in a town where everything is classified, known, pigeon-holed, ticketed, and numbered, as in Besançon, Albert Savaron was received without hesitation by the lawyers of the town. They were satisfied to say, 'Here is a man who does not know his Besançon. Who the devil can have sent him here? What can he hope to do? Sending his card to the judges instead of calling in person! What a blunder!' And so, three days after, Savaron had ceased to exist. He took as his servant old Monsieur Galard's man—Galard being dead—Jérôme, who can cook a little. Albert Savaron was all the more completely forgotten, because no one had seen him or met him anywhere."

"Then, does he not go to mass?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"He goes on Sundays to Saint-Pierre, but to the early service, at eight in the morning. He rises every night between one and two in the morning, works till eight, has his breakfast, and then goes on working. He walks in his garden, going round fifty or perhaps sixty times; then he goes in, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven."

"How did you learn all that?" Madame de Chavoncourt asked Monsieur Soulas.

"In the first place, madame, I live in the Rue Neuve, at the corner of the Rue du Perron; I look out on the house where this mysterious personage lodges; then, of course, there are communications between my tiger and Jérôme."

"And you gossip with Babylas!" exclaimed Madame de Chavoncourt.

"What would you have me do out riding?"

"Well—and how was it that you engaged a stranger for your defense?" asked the Baroness, thus placing the conversation in the hands of the vicar-general.

"The president of the court played this pleader a trick by appointing him to defend at the assizes a half-witted peasant accused of forgery. But Monsieur Savaron procured the poor man's acquittal by proving his innocence and showing that he had been a tool in the hands of the real culprits. Not only did his line of defense succeed, but it led to the arrest of two of the witnesses, who were proved guilty and condemned. His speech struck the court and the jury. One of these, a merchant, placed a difficult case next day in the hands of Monsieur Savaron, and he won it. In the position in which we found ourselves, Monsieur Berryer finding it impossible to come to Besançon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised him to employ this Monsieur Albert Savaron, foretelling our success. As soon as I saw him and heard him, I felt faith in him, and I was not wrong."

"Is he then so extraordinary?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Certainly, madame," replied the vicar-general.

"Well, tell us about it," said Madame de Watteville.

"The first time I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in his outer room next the ante-room—old Galard's drawing-room—which he has had painted like old oak, and which I found to be entirely lined with law-books, arranged on shelves also painted as old oak. The painting and the books are the sole decoration of the room, for the furniture consists of an old writing-table of carved wood, six old armchairs covered with tapestry, window curtains of gray stuff bordered with green, and a green carpet over the floor. The ante-room stove heats this library as well. As I waited there I did not picture my advocate as a young man. But this singular setting is in perfect harmony with his person; for Monsieur Savaron came out in a black merino dressing-

gown tied with a red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat, and a red smoking-cap."

"The devil's colors!" exclaimed Madame de Watteville.

"Yes," said the abbé; "but a magnificent head. Black hair already streaked with a little gray, hair like that of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in pictures, with thick shining curls, hair as stiff as horsehair; a round white throat like a woman's; a splendid forehead, furrowed by the strong median line which great schemes, great thoughts, deep meditations stamp on a great man's brow; an olive complexion marbled with red, a square nose, eyes of flame, hollow cheeks, with two long lines betraying much suffering, a mouth with a sardonic smile, and a small chin, narrow, and too short; crows' feet on his temples; deep-set eyes, moving in their sockets like burning balls; but, in spite of all these indications of a violently passionate nature, his manner was calm, deeply resigned, and his voice of penetrating sweetness, which surprised me in court by its easy flow; a true orator's voice, now clear and appealing, sometimes insinuating, but a voice of thunder when needful, and lending itself to sarcasm to become incisive.

"Monsieur Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. And his hands are those of a prelate.

"The second time I called on him he received me in his bedroom, adjoining the library, and smiled at my astonishment when I saw there a wretched chest of drawers, a shabby carpet, a camp-bed, and cotton window-curtains. He came out of his private room, to which no one is admitted, as Jérôme informed me; the man did not go in, but merely knocked at the door.

"The third time he was breakfasting in his library on the most frugal fare; but on this occasion, as he had spent the night studying our documents, as I had my attorney with me, and as that worthy Monsieur Girardet is long-winded, I had leisure to study the stranger. He certainly is no ordinary man. There is more than one secret behind that face, at

once so terrible and so gentle, patient and yet impatient, broad and yet hollow. I saw, too, that he stooped a little, like all men who have some heavy burden to bear."

"Why did so eloquent a man leave Paris? For what purpose did he come to Besançon?" asked pretty Madame de Chavoncourt. "Could no one tell him how little chance a stranger has of succeeding here? The good folks of Besançon will make use of him, but they will not allow him to make use of them. Why, having come, did he make so little effort that it needed a freak of the president's to bring him forward?"

"After carefully studying that fine head," said the abbé, looking keenly at the lady who had interrupted him, in such a way as to suggest that there was something he would not tell, "and especially after hearing him this morning reply to one of the bigwigs of the Paris bar, I believe that this man, who may be five-and-thirty, will by-and-by make a great sensation."

"Why should we discuss him? You have gained your action, and paid him," said Madame de Watteville, watching her daughter, who, all the time the vicar-general had been speaking, seemed to hang on his lips.

The conversation changed, and no more was heard of Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the cleverest of the vicars-general of the diocese had all the greater charm for Rosalie because there was a romance behind it. For the first time in her life she had come across the marvelous, the exceptional, which smiles on every youthful imagination, and which curiosity, so eager at Rosalie's age, goes forth to meet half-way. What an ideal being was this Albert—gloomy, unhappy, eloquent, laborious, as compared by Mademoiselle de Watteville to that chubby fat Count, bursting with health, paying compliments, and talking of the fashions in the very face of the splendor of the old Counts of Rupt. Amédée had cost her many

quarrels and scoldings, and, indeed, she knew him only too well; while this Albert Savaron offered many enigmas to be solved.

"Albert Savaron de Savarus," she repeated to herself.

Now, to see him, to catch sight of him! This was the desire of the girl to whom desire was hitherto unknown. She pondered in her heart, in her fancy, in her brain, the least phrases used by the Abbé de Grancey, for all his words had told.

"A fine forehead?" said she to herself, looking at the head of every man seated at the table; "I do not see one fine one. Monsieur de Soulas' is too prominent; Monsieur de Grancey's is fine, but he is seventy, and has no hair, it is impossible to see where his forehead ends."

"What is the matter, Rosalie; you are eating nothing?"

"I am not hungry, mamma," said she. "A prelate's hands——" she went on to herself. "I cannot remember our handsome archbishop's hands, though he confirmed me."

Finally, in the midst of her coming and going in the labyrinth of her meditations, she remembered a lighted window she had seen from her bed, gleaming through the trees of the two adjoining gardens, when she had happened to wake in the night—— "Then that was his light!" thought she. "I might see him! I will see him."

"Monsieur de Grancey, is the chapter's lawsuit quite settled?" asked Rosalie point-blank of the vicar-general, during a moment of silence.

Madame de Watteville exchanged rapid glances with the vicar-general.

"What can that matter to you, my dear child?" she said to Rosalie, with an affected sweetness which made her daughter cautious for the rest of her days.

"It might be carried to the Court of Appeal, but our adversaries will think twice about that," replied the abbé.

"I never could have believed that Rosalie would think

about a lawsuit all through a dinner," remarked Madame de Watteville.

"Nor I either," said Rosalie, in a dreamy way that made every one laugh. "But Monsieur de Grancey was so full of it that I was interested."

The company rose from table and returned to the drawing-room. All through the evening Rosalie listened in case Albert Savaron should be mentioned again; but beyond the congratutations offered by each newcomer to the abbé on having gained his suit, to which no one added any praise of the advocate, no more was said about it. Mademoiselle de Watteville impatiently looked forward to bedtime. She had promised herself to wake at between two and three in the morning, and to look at Albert's dressing-room windows. When the hour came, she felt much pleasure in gazing at the glimmer from the lawyer's candles that shone through the trees, now almost bare of their leaves. By the help of the strong sight of a young girl, which curiosity seems to make longer, she saw Albert writing, and fancied she could distinguish the color of the furniture, which she thought was red. From the chimney above the roof rose a thick column of smoke.

"While all the world is sleeping, he is awake—like God!" thought she.

The education of girls brings with it such serious problems —for the future of a nation is in the mother—that the University of France long since set itself the task of having nothing to do with it. Here is one of these problems: Ought girls to be informed on all points? Ought their minds to be under restraint? It need not be said that the religious system is one of restraint. If you enlighten them, you make them demons before their time; if you keep them from thinking, you end in the sudden explosion so well shown by Molière in the character of Agnès, and you leave this suppressed mind, so fresh and clear-seeing, as swift and as logical as that of a sav-

age, at the mercy of an accident. This inevitable crisis was brought on in Mademoiselle de Watteville by the portrait which one of the most prudent abbés of the Chapter of Besançon imprudently allowed himself to sketch at a dinner party.

Next morning, Mademoiselle de Watteville, while dressing, necessarily looked out at Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the Hôtel de Rupt.

"What would have become of me," thought she, "if he had lived anywhere else? Here I can, at any rate, see him. What is he thinking about?"

Having seen this extraordinary man, though at a distance, the only man whose countenance stood forth in contrast with crowds of Besançon faces she had hitherto met with, Rosalie at once jumped at the idea of getting into his home, of ascertaining the reasons of so much mystery, of hearing that eloquent voice, of winning a glance from those fine eyes. All this she set her heart on, but how could she achieve it?

All that day she drew her needle through her embroidery with the obtuse concentration of a girl who, like Agnès, seems to be thinking of nothing, but who is reflecting on things in general so deeply that her artifice is unfailing. As a result of this profound meditation, Rosalie thought she would go to confession. Next morning, after mass, she had a brief interview with the Abbé Giroud at Saint-Pierre, and managed so ingeniously that the hour for her confession was fixed for Sunday morning at half-past seven, before eight o'clock mass. She committed herself to a dozen fibs in order to find herself, just for once, in the church at the hour when the lawyer came to mass. Then she was seized with an impulse of extreme affection for her father; she went to see him in his workroom, and asked him for all sorts of information on the art of turning, ending by advising him to turn larger pieces, columns. After persuading her father to set to work on some twisted pillars, one of the difficulties of the turner's art, she suggested

that he should make use of a large heap of stones that lay in the middle of the garden to construct a sort of grotto on which he might erect a little temple or Belvedere in which his twisted pillars could be used and shown off to all the world.

At the climax of the pleasure the poor unoccupied man derived from this scheme, Rosalie said, as she kissed him, "Above all, do not tell mamma who gave you the notion; she would scold me."

"Do not be afraid!" replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned as bitterly as his daughter under the tyranny of the terrible descendant of the Rupts.

So Rosalie had a certain prospect of seeing ere long a charming observatory built, whence her eyes would command the lawyer's private room. And there are men for whose sake young girls can carry out such master-strokes of diplomacy, while, for the most part, like Albert Savaron, they know it not.

The Sunday so impatiently looked for arrived, and Rosalie dressed with such carefulness as made Mariette, the ladies' maid, smile.

"It is the first time I ever knew mademoiselle to be so fidgety," said Mariette.

"It strikes me," said Rosalie, with a glance at Mariette, which brought poppies to her cheeks, "that you too are more particular on some days than on others."

As she went down the steps, across the courtyard, and through the gates, Rosalie's heart beat, as everybody's does in anticipation of a great event. Hitherto she had never known what it was to walk in the streets; for a moment she had felt as though her mother must read her schemes on her brow, and forbid her going to confession, and she now felt new blood in her feet, she lifted them as though she trod on fire. She had, of course, arranged to be with her confessor at a quarter-past eight, telling her mother eight, so as to have about a quarter of an hour near Albert. She got to church

before mass, and after a short prayer, went to see if the Abbé Giroud were in his confessional, simply to pass the time; and she thus placed herself in such a way as to see Albert as he came into church.

The man must have been atrociously ugly who did not seem handsome to Mademoiselle de Watteville in the frame of mind produced by her curiosity. And Albert Savaron, who was really very striking, made all the more impression on Rosalie because his mien, his walk, his carriage, everything down to his clothing, had the indescribable stamp which can only be expressed by the word mystery.

He came in. The church, till now gloomy, seemed to Rosalie to be illuminated. The girl was fascinated by his slow and solemn demeanor, as of a man who bears a world on his shoulders, and whose deep gaze, whose very gestures, combine to express a devastating or absorbing thought. Rosalie now understood the vicar-general's words in their fullest extent. Yes, those eyes of tawny brown, shot with golden lights, covered an ardor which revealed itself in sudden flashes. Rosalie, with a recklessness which Mariette noted, stood in the lawyer's way, so as to exchange glances with him; and this glance turned her blood, for it seethed and boiled as though its warmth were doubled.

As soon as Albert had taken a seat, Mademoiselle de Watteville quickly found a place whence she could see him perfectly during all the time the abbé might leave her. When Mariette said "Here is Monsieur Giroud," it seemed to Rosalie that the interval had lasted no more than a few minutes. By the time she came out from the confessional, mass was over. Albert had left the church.

"The vicar-general was right," thought she. "*He* is unhappy. Why should this eagle—for he has the eyes of an eagle—swoop down on Besançon? Oh! I must know everything! But how?"

Under the smart of this new desire Rosalie set the stitches

of her worsted-work with exquisite precision, and hid her meditations under a little innocent air, which shammed simplicity to deceive Madame de Watteville.

From that Sunday, when Mademoiselle de Watteville had met that look, or, if you please, received this baptism of fire—a fine expression of Napoleon's which may be well applied to love—she eagerly promoted the plan for the Belvedere.

"Mamma," said she one day when two columns were turned, "my father has taken a singular idea into his head; he is turning columns for a Belvedere he intends to erect on the heap of stones in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of it? It seems to me——"

"I approve of everything your father does," said Madame de Watteville drily, "and it is a wife's duty to submit to her husband even if she does not approve of his ideas. Why should I object to a thing which is of no importance in itself, if it only amuses Monsieur de Watteville?"

"Well, because from thence we shall see into Monsieur de Soulas' rooms, and Monsieur de Soulas will see us when we are there. Perhaps remarks may be made——"

"Do you presume, Rosalie, to guide your parents, and think you know more than they do of life and the proprieties?"

"I say no more, mamma. Besides, my father said that there would be a room in the grotto, where it would be cool, and where we can take coffee."

"Your father has had an excellent idea," said Madame de Watteville, who forthwith went to look at the columns.

She gave her entire approbation to the Baron de Watteville's design, while choosing for the erection of this monument a spot at the bottom of the garden, which could not be seen from Monsieur de Soulas' windows, but whence they could perfectly see into Albert Savaron's rooms. A builder was sent for, who undertook to construct a grotto, of which the top should be reached by a path three feet wide through the

rock-work, where periwinkles would grow, iris, clematis, ivy, honeysuckle, and Virginia creeper. The Baroness desired that the inside should be lined with rustic woodwork, such as was then the fashion for flower-stands, with a looking-glass against the wall, an ottoman forming a box, and a table of inlaid bark. Monsieur de Soulas proposed that the floor should be of asphalt. Rosalie suggested a hanging chandelier of rustic wood.

"The Watteville are having something charming done in their garden," was rumored in Besançon.

"They are rich, and can afford a thousand crowns for a whim——"

"A thousand crowns!" exclaimed Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, a thousand crowns," cried young Monsieur de Soulas. "A man has been sent for from Paris to rusticate the interior, but it will be very pretty. Monsieur de Watteville himself is making the chandelier, and has begun to carve the wood."

"Berquet is to make a cellar under it," said an abbé.

"No," replied young Monsieur de Soulas, "he is raising the kiosk on a concrete foundation, that it may not be damp."

"You know the very least things that are done in that house," said Madame de Chavoncourt sourly, as she looked at one of her great girls waiting to be married for a year past.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, with a little flush of pride in thinking of the success of her Belvedere, discerned in herself a vast superiority over every one about her. No one guessed that a little girl, supposed to be a witless goose, had simply made up her mind to get a closer view of the lawyer Savaron's private study.

Albert Savaron's brilliant defense of the Cathedral Chapter was all the sooner forgotten because the envy of other lawyers was aroused. Also, Savaron, faithful to his seclusion, went nowhere. Having no friends to cry him up, and seeing no

one, he increased the chances of being forgotten which are common to strangers in such a town as Besançon. Nevertheless, he pleaded three times at the commercial tribunal in three knotty cases which had to be carried to the superior court. He thus gained as clients four of the chief merchants of the place, who discerned in him so much good sense and sound legal discernment that they placed their claims in his hands.

On the day when the Watteville family inaugurated the Belvedere, Savaron also was founding a monument. Thanks to the connections he had obscurely formed among the upper class of merchants in Besançon, he was starting a fortnightly paper, called the *Eastern Review*, with the help of forty shares of five hundred francs each, taken up by his ten first clients, on whom he had impressed the necessity for promoting the interests of Besançon, the town where the traffic should meet between Mulhouse and Lyons, and the chief centre between Mulhouse and the Rhone.

To compete with Strasbourg, was it not needful that Besançon should become a focus of enlightenment as well as of trade? The leading questions relating to the interests of Eastern France could only be dealt with in a review. What a glorious task to rob Strasbourg and Dijon of their literary importance, to bring light to the East of France, and compete with the centralizing influence of Paris! These reflections, put forward by Albert, were repeated by the ten merchants, who believed them to be their own.

Monsieur Savaron did not commit the blunder of putting his name in front; he left the finances of the concern to his chief client, Monsieur Boucher, connected by marriage with one of the great publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he kept the editorship, with a share of the profits as founder. The commercial interest appealed to Dôle, to Dijon, to Salins, to Neufchâtel, to the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lous-le-Saulnier. The concurrence was invited of the learning and

energy of every scientific student in the districts of le Bugey, la Bresse, and Franche Comté. By the influence of commercial interests and common feeling, five hundred subscribers were booked in consideration of the low price : the *Review* cost eight francs a quarter.

To avoid hurting the conceit of the provincials by refusing their articles, the lawyer hit on the good idea of suggesting a desire for the literary management of this *Review* to Monsieur Boucher's eldest son, a young man of two-and-twenty, very eager for fame, to whom the snares and woes of literary responsibilities were utterly unknown. Albert quietly kept the upper hand, and made Alfred Boucher his devoted adherent. Alfred was the only man in Besançon with whom the king of the bar was on familiar terms. Alfred came in the morning to discuss the articles for the next number with Albert in the garden. It is needless to say that the trial number contained a "Meditation" by Alfred, which Savaron approved. In his conversations with Alfred, Albert would let drop some great ideas, subjects for articles of which Alfred availed himself. And thus the merchant's son fancied he was making capital out of the great man. To Alfred, Albert was a man of genius, of profound politics. The commercial world, enchanted at the success of the *Review*, had to pay up only three-tenths of their shares. Two hundred more subscribers, and the periodical would pay a dividend to the shareholders of five per cent., the editor remaining unpaid. This editing, indeed, was beyond price.

After the third number the *Review* was recognized for exchange by all the papers published in France, which Albert henceforth read at home. This third number included a tale signed "A. S.," and attributed to the famous lawyer. In spite of the small attention paid by the higher circle of Besançon to the *Review*, which was accused of liberal views, this, the first novel produced in the county, came under discussion that mid-winter at Madame de Chavoncourt's.

"Papa," said Rosalie, "a *Review* is published in Besançon; you ought to take it in; and keep it in your room, for mamma would not let me read it, but you will lend it to me."

Monsieur de Watteville, eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who for the last five months had given him so many proofs of filial affection—Monsieur de Watteville went in person to subscribe for a year to the *Eastern Review* and loaned the four numbers already out to his daughter. In the course of the night Rosalie devoured the tale—the first she had ever read in her life—but she had only known life for two months past. Hence the effect produced on her by this work must not be judged by ordinary rules. Without prejudice of any kind as to the greater or less merit of this composition from the pen of a Parisian who had thus imported into the province the manner, the brilliancy, if you will, of the new literary school, it could not fail to be a masterpiece to a young girl abandoning all her intelligence and her innocent heart to her first reading of this kind.

Also, from what she had heard said, Rosalie had by intuition conceived a notion of it which strangely enhanced the interest of this novel. She hoped to find in it the sentiments, and perhaps something of the life of Albert. From the first pages this opinion took so strong a hold on her, that, after reading the fragment to the end, she was certain that it was no mistake. Here, then, is this confession, in which, according to the critics of Madame de Chavoncourt's drawing-room, Albert had imitated some modern writers, who, for lack of inventiveness, relate their private joys, their private griefs, or the mysterious events of their own life:

Ambition for Love's Sake.

In 1823 two young men, having agreed as a plan for a holiday to make a tour through Switzerland, set out from Lucerne

one fine morning in the month of July in a boat pulled by three oarsmen. They started for Fluelen, intending to stop at every notable spot on the lake of the four cantons. The views which shut in the waters on the way from Lucerne to Fluelen offer every combination that the most exacting fancy can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and rocks, brooks, and pastures, trees, and torrents. Here are austere solitudes and charming headlands, smiling and trimly kept meadows, forests crowning perpendicular granite cliffs like plumes, deserted but verdant reaches opening out, and valleys whose beauty seems the lovelier in the dreamy distance.

As they passed the pretty hamlet of Gersau, one of the friends looked for a long time at a wooden house which seemed to have been recently built, enclosed by a paling, and standing on a promontory, almost bathed by the waters. As the boat rowed past, a woman's head was raised against the background of the room on the upper story of this house, to admire the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men met the glance thus indifferently given by the unknown fair one.

"Let us stop here," said he to his friend. "We meant to make Lucerne our headquarters for seeing Switzerland; you will not take it amiss, Léopold, if I change my mind and stay here to take charge of our possessions. Then you can go where you please; my journey is ended. Pull to land, men, and put us out at this village; we will breakfast here. I will go back to Lucerne to fetch all our luggage, and before you leave you will know in which house I take a lodging, where you will find me on your return."

"Here or at Lucerne," replied Léopold, "the difference is not so great that I need hinder you from following your whim."

These two youths were friends in the truest sense of the word. They were of the same age; they had learned at the same school; and after studying the law, they were spending their holiday in the classical tour in Switzerland. Léopold,

by his father's determination, was already pledged to a place in a notary's office in Paris. His spirit of rectitude, his gentleness, and the coolness of his senses and his brain, guaranteed him to be a docile pupil. Léopold could see himself a notary in Paris: his life lay before him like one of the high-roads that cross the plains of France, and he looked along its whole length with philosophical resignation.

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a strong contrast with Léopold's, and their antagonism had no doubt had the result of tightening the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a man of rank, who was carried off by a premature death before he could make any arrangements for securing the means of existence to a woman he fondly loved and to Rodolphe. Thus cheated by a stroke of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to a heroic measure. She sold everything she owed to the munificence of her child's father for a sum of more than a hundred thousand francs, bought with it a life annuity for herself at a high rate, and thus acquired an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to devote the whole of it to the education of her son, so as to give him all the personal advantages that might help to make his fortune, while saving, by strict economy, a small capital to be his when he came of age. It was bold; it was counting on her own life; but without this boldness the good mother would certainly have found it impossible to live and to bring her child up suitably, and he was her only hope, her future, the spring of all her joys.

Rodolphe, the son of a most charming Parisian woman, and a man of mark, a nobleman of Brabant, was cursed with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had in everything shown a most ardent nature. In him mere desire became a guiding force and the motive power of his whole being, the stimulus to his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the pains taken by a clever mother, who was alarmed when she detected this predisposition, Rodolphe

wished for things as a poet imagines, as a mathematician calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician creates melodies. Tender-hearted, like his mother, he dashed with inconceivable violence and impetus of thought after the object of his desires; he annihilated time. While dreaming of the fulfillment of his schemes, he always overlooked the means of attainment. "When my son has children," said his mother, "he will want them born grown up."

This fine frenzy, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to achieve his studies with brilliant results, and to become what the English call an accomplished gentleman. His mother was then proud of him, though still fearing a catastrophe if ever a passion should possess a heart at once so tender and so susceptible, so vehement and so kind. Therefore, the judicious mother had encouraged the friendship which bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, since she saw in the cold and faithful young notary a guardian, a comrade, who might to a certain extent take her place if by some misfortune she should be lost to her son. Rodolphe's mother, still handsome at three-and-forty, had inspired Léopold with an ardent passion. This circumstance made the two young men even more intimate.

So Léopold, knowing Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping at a village and giving up the projected journey to Saint-Gothard, on the strength of a single glance at the upper window of a house. While breakfast was prepared for them at the Swan Inn, the friends walked round the hamlet and came to the neighborhood of the pretty new house; here, while gazing about him and talking to the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered the residence of some decent folk, who were willing to take him as a boarder, a very frequent custom in Switzerland. They offered him a bedroom looking over the lake and the mountains, and whence he had a view of one of those immense sweeping reaches which, in this lake, are the admiration of every traveler. This house was divided by

a roadway and a little creek from the new house, where Rodolphe had caught sight of the unknown fair one's face.

For a hundred francs a month Rodolphe was relieved of all thought for the necessaries of life. But, in consideration of the outlay the Stopfer couple expected to make, they bargained for three months' residence and a month's payment in advance. Rub a Swiss ever so little, and you find the usurer. After breakfast, Rodolphe at once made himself at home by depositing in his room such property as he had brought with him for the journey to the Saint-Gothard, and he watched Léopold as he set out, moved by the spirit of routine, to carry out the excursion for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a fallen rock on the shore, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he turned to examine the new house with stolen glances, hoping to see the fair unknown. Alas! he went in without its having given a sign of life. During dinner, in the company of Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, retired coopers from Neufchâtel, he questioned them as to the neighborhood, and ended by learning all he wanted to know about the lady, thanks to his hosts' loquacity; for they were ready to pour out their budget of gossip without any pressing.

The fair stranger's name was Fanny Lovelace. This name (pronounced *Loveless*) is that of an old English family, but Richardson has given it to a creation whose fame eclipses all others! Miss Lovelace had come to settle by the lake for her father's health, the physicians having recommended him the air of Lucerne. These two English people had arrived with no other servant than a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child, much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited very intelligently, and had settled, two winters since, with Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, the retired head-gardeners of his excellency Count Borromeo of Isola Bella and Isola Madre in the Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who were possessed of an income of about a thousand crowns a year, had

let the top story of their house to the Lovelaces for three years, at a rent of two hundred francs a year. Old Lovelace, a man of ninety, and much broken, was too poor to allow himself any gratifications, and very rarely went out; his daughter worked to maintain him, translating English books, and writing some herself, it was said. The Lovelaces could not afford to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses and guides to explore the neighborhood.

Poverty demanding such privation as this excites all the greater compassion among the Swiss, because it deprives them of a chance of profit. The cook of the establishment fed the three English boarders for a hundred francs a month inclusive. In Gersau it was generally believed, however, that the gardener and his wife, in spite of their pretensions, used the cook's name as a screen to net the little profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had made beautiful gardens round their house, and had built a hothouse. The flowers, the fruit, and the botanical rarities of this spot were what had induced the young lady to settle on it as she passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was said to be nineteen years old; she was the old man's youngest child, and the object of his adulation. About two months prior she had hired a piano from Lucerne, for she seemed to be crazy about music, his hosts informed him.

"She loves flowers and music, and she is unmarried!" thought Rodolphe; "what good luck!"

The next day Rodolphe went to ask leave to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to be somewhat famous. The permission was not immediately granted. The retired gardeners asked, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport; it was sent to them at once. The paper was not returned to him till next morning, by the hands of the cook, who expressed her master's pleasure in showing him their place. Rodolphe went to the Bergmanns, not without a certain trepidation, known only to persons of strong feelings,

who go through as much passion in a moment as some men experience in a whole lifetime.

After dressing himself carefully to gratify the old gardeners of the Borromean Islands, whom he regarded as the warders of his treasure, he went all over the grounds, looking at the house now and again, but with much caution ; the old couple treated him with evident distrust. But his attention was soon attracted by the little English deaf-mute, in whom his discernment, though young as yet, enabled him to recognize a girl of African, or at least of Sicilian origin. The child had the golden-brown color of a Havana cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of very un-British length, hair blacker than black ; and under this almost olive skin, sinews of extraordinary strength and feverish alertness. She looked at Rodolphe with amazing curiosity and effrontery, watching his every movement.

"To whom does that little Moresco belong?" he asked worthy Madame Bergmann.

"To the English," Monsieur Bergmann replied.

"But she never was born in England !"

"They may have, perhaps, brought her from the Indies," said Madame Bergmann.

"I have been told that Miss Lovelace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during the residence by the lake to which I am condemned by my doctor's orders, she would allow me to join her."

"They receive no one, and will not see anybody," said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having been invited into the house, or taken into the part of the garden that lay between the front of the house and the shore of the little promontory. On that side the house had a balcony above the first floor, made of wood, and covered by the roof, which projected deeply like the roof of a chalet on all four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had

loudly praised the elegance of this arrangement, and talked of the view from that balcony, but all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns it struck him that he was a simpleton, like any man of spirit and imagination disappointed of the result of a plan which he had believed would succeed.

In the evening he, of course, went out in a boat on the lake, round and about the spit of land, to Brunnen and to Schwytz, and came in at nightfall. From afar he saw the window open and brightly lighted; he heard the sound of a piano and the tones of an exquisite voice. He made the boatmen stop, and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening to an Italian air delightfully sung. When the singing ceased, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and rowers. At the cost of wetting his feet, he went to sit down under the water-worn granite shelf crowned by a thick hedge of thorny acacia, by the side of which ran a long lime avenue in the Bergmanns' garden. By the end of an hour he heard steps and voices just above him, but the words that reached his ears were all Italian, and spoken by two women.

He took advantage of the moment when the two speakers were at one end of the walk to slip noiselessly to the other. After half an hour of struggling he got to the end of the avenue, and there took up a position whence, without being seen or heard, he could watch the two women without being observed by them as they came towards him. What was Rodolphe's amazement on recognizing the deaf-mute as one of them; she was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian.

It was now eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect on the lake and around the dwelling that the two women must have thought themselves safe; in all Gersau there could be no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe supposed that the girl's dumbness must be a necessary deception. From the way in which they both spoke Italian, Rodolphe suspected that it was the mother tongue of both girls, and concluded that the English name also hid some disguise.

"They are Italian refugees," said he to himself, "outlaws in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young lady waits till it is dark to walk and talk in security."

He lay down by the side of the hedge, and crawled like a snake to find a way between two acacia shrubs. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or tearing deep scratches in his back, he got through the hedge when the so-called Miss Fanny and her pretended deaf-and-dumb maid were at the other end of the path; then, when they had come within twenty yards of him without seeing him, for he was in the shadow of the hedge, and the moon was shining brightly, he suddenly rose.

"Fear nothing," said he in French to the Italian girl, "I am not a spy. You are refugees, I have guessed that. I am a Frenchman whom one look from you has fixed at Gersau."

Rodolphe, startled by the acute pain caused by some steel instrument piercing his side, fell like a log.

"*Nel lago con pietra!*" said the terrible dumb girl.

"Oh, Gina!" exclaimed the Italian.

"She has missed me," said Rodolphe, pulling from the wound a stiletto, which had been turned by one of the false ribs. "But a little higher up it would have been deep in my heart. I was wrong, Francesca," he went on, remembering the name he had heard little Gina repeat several times; "I owe her no grudge, do not scold her. The happiness of speaking to you is well worth the prick of a stiletto. Only show me the way out; I must get back to the Stopfers' house. Be easy; I shall tell nothing."

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls made him sit down on a bench and take off his coat, his waistcoat, and his cravat. Then Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound strongly. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaster, which she applied to the wound.

"You can walk now as far as your house," she said.

Each took an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a side gate, of which the key was in Francesca's apron pocket.

"Does Gina speak French?" said Rodolphe to Francesca.

"No. But do not excite yourself," replied Francesca with some impatience.

"Let me look at you," said Rodolphe pathetically, "for it may be long before I am able to come again——"

He leaned against one of the gate-posts contemplating the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to gaze at her for a moment under the sweetest silence and the sweetest night that ever, perhaps, shone on this lake, the king of these beautiful Swiss lakes.

Francesca was quite of the classic Italian type, and such as imagination supposes or pictures, or, if you will, dreams, that Italian women are. What first struck Rodolphe was the grace and elegance of a figure evidently powerful, though so slender as to appear fragile. An amber paleness overspread her face, betraying sudden interest, but it did not dim the voluptuous glance of her liquid eyes of velvety blackness. A pair of hands as beautiful as ever a Greek sculptor added to the polished arms of a statue grasped Rodolphe's arm, and their whiteness gleamed against his black coat. The rash Frenchman could but just discern the long, oval shape of her face, and a melancholy mouth showing brilliant teeth between the parted lips, full, fresh, and brightly red. The exquisite lines of this face guaranteed to Francesca permanent beauty; but what most struck Rodolphe was the adorable freedom, the Italian frankness of this woman, wholly absorbed as she was in her pity for him.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm as far as the Stopfers' door, and fled like a swallow as soon as she had rung.

"These patriots do not play at killing!" said Rodolphe to himself as he felt his sufferings when he found himself in his

bed. "'*Nel lago!*' Gina would have pitched me into the lake with a stone tied to my neck."

Next day he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon there, and when the surgeon came, enjoined on him absolute secrecy, giving him to understand that his honor strictly depended on such observance.

Léopold returned from his excursion on the day when his friend first got out of bed. Rodolphe made up a story, and begged him to go to Lucerne to fetch their luggage and letters. Léopold brought back the most fatal, the most dreadful news: Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on their way from Bâle to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, had reached Lucerne the day they left for Fluelen.

In spite of Léopold's utmost precautions, Rodolphe fell ill of a nervous fever. As soon as Léopold saw his friend out of danger, he set out for France with a power of attorney, and Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could grow calmer. The young Frenchman's position, his despair, the circumstances which made such a loss worse for him than for any other man, were known, and secured him the pity and interest of every one at Gersau. Every morning the pretended dumb girl came to see him and bring him news of her mistress.

As soon as Rodolphe could go out he went to the Bergmanns' house, to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had taken in his sorrow and his illness. For the first time since he had lodged with the Bergmanns the old Italian admitted a stranger to his room, where Rodolphe was received with the cordiality due to his misfortunes and to his being a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of him. Francesca looked so lovely by candlelight that first evening that she shed a ray of brightness on his grieving heart. Her smiles flung the roses of hope on his woe. She sang, not indeed gay songs, but grave and solemn melodies suited to

the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he observed this touching care.

At about eight o'clock the old man left the young people without any sign of uneasiness, and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she led Rodolphe on to the balcony, whence they perceived the sublime scenery of the lake, and signed to him to be seated by her on a rustic wooden bench.

"Am I very indiscreet in asking how old you are, cara Francesca?" said Rodolphe.

"Nineteen," said she, "well past."

"If anything in the world could soothe my sorrow," he went on, "it would be the hope of winning you from your father, whatever your fortune may be. So beautiful as you are, you seem to me richer than a prince's daughter. And I tremble as I confess to you the feelings with which you have inspired me; but they are deep—they are eternal."

"*Zitto!*" said Francesca, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips. "Say no more; I am not free. I have been married these three years."

For a few minutes utter silence reigned. When the Italian girl, alarmed at Rodolphe's stillness, went close to him, she found that he had fainted.

"*Povero!*" she said to herself. "And I thought him cold."

She fetched some salts, and revived Rodolphe by making him smell at them.

"Married!" said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. And then his tears flowed freely.

"Child!" said she. "But there still is hope. My husband is——"

"Eighty?" Rodolphe put in.

"No," said she with a smile, "but sixty-five. He has disguised himself as much older to mislead the police."

"Dearest," said Rodolphe, "a few more shocks of this kind and I shall die. Only when you have known me

twenty years will you understand the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations for happiness. This plant," he went on, pointing to the yellow jasmine which covered the balustrade, "does not climb more eagerly to spread itself in the sunbeams than I have clung to you for this month past. I love you passionately. That love will be the secret fount of my life—I may possibly die of it."

"Oh! Frenchman, Frenchman!" said she, emphasizing her exclamation with a little incredulous grimace.

"Shall I not be forced to wait, to accept you at the hands of time?" said he gravely. "But know this; if you are in earnest in what you have allowed to escape you, I will wait for you faithfully, without suffering any other attachment to grow up in my heart."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"None," said he, "not even a passing fancy. I have my fortune to make; you must have a splendid one, nature created you a princess——"

At this word Francesca could not repress a faint smile, which gave her face the most bewitching expression, something subtle, like what the great Leonardo has so well depicted in the *Gioconda*. This smile made Rodolphe pause. "Ah, yes!" he went on, "you must suffer much from the destitution to which exile has brought you. Oh, if you would make me happy above all men, and consecrate my love, you would treat me as a friend. Ought I not to be your friend? My poor mother has left sixty thousand francs of savings; take half."

Francesca looked steadily at him. This piercing gaze went to the bottom of Rodolphe's soul.

"We want nothing; my work amply supplies our luxuries," she replied in a grave voice.

"And can I endure that a Francesca should work?" cried he. "One day you will return to your country and find all you left there." Again the Italian girl looked at Rodolphe.

"And you will then repay me what you may have condescended to borrow," he added, with an expression full of delicate feeling.

"Let us drop this subject," said she, with incomparable dignity of gesture, expression, and attitude. "Make a splendid fortune, be one of the remarkable men of your country; that is my desire. Fame is a drawbridge which may serve to cross a deep gulf. Be ambitious, if you must. I believe you have great and powerful talents, but use them rather for the happiness of mankind than to deserve me; you will be all the greater in my eyes."

In the course of this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered that Francesca was an enthusiast for liberal ideas, and for that worship of liberty which had led to the three revolutions in Naples, Piedmont, and Spain. On leaving, he was shown to the door by Gina, the so-called mute. At eleven o'clock no one was astir in the village, there was no fear of listeners; Rodolphe took Gina into a corner, and asked her in a low voice and bad Italian, "Who are your master and mistress, child? Tell me, I will give you this fine new gold-piece."

"Monsieur," said the girl, taking the coin, "my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution, and the conspirator of all others whom Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg."

"A bookseller's wife! Ah, so much the better," thought he; "we are on an equal footing. And what is her family?" he added, "for she looks like a queen."

"All Italian women do," replied Gina proudly. "Her father's name is Colonna."

Emboldened by Francesca's modest rank, Rodolphe had an awning fitted to his boat and cushions in the stern. When this was done, the lover came to propose to Francesca to come out on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to carry out her part of a young English miss in the eyes of the villagers,

but she brought Gina with her. Francesca Colonna's lightest actions betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which she took her place at the end of the boat Rodolphe felt himself in some sort cut off from her, and, in the face of a look of pride worthy of an aristocrat, the familiarity he had intended fell dead. By a glance Francesca made herself a princess, with all the prerogatives she might have enjoyed in the middle ages. She seemed to have read the thoughts of this vassal who was so audacious as to constitute himself her protector.

Already, in the furniture of the room where Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the various trifles she made use of, Rodolphe had detected indications of a superior character and a fine fortune. All these observations now recurred to his mind; he became thoughtful after having been trampled on, as it were, by Francesca's dignity. Gina, her half-grown-up *confidante*, also seemed to have a mocking expression as she gave a covert or side glance at Rodolphe. This obvious disagreement between the Italian lady's rank and her manners was a fresh puzzle to Rodolphe, who suspected some further trick like Gina's assumed dumbness.

"Where would you go, Signora Lamporani?" he asked.

"Towards Lucerne," replied Francesca in French.

"Good!" said Rodolphe to himself, "she is not startled by hearing me speak her name; she had, no doubt, foreseen that I should ask Gina—she is so cunning. What is your quarrel with me?" he went on, going at last to sit down by her side, and asking her by a gesture to give him her hand, which she withdrew. "You are cold and ceremonious; what, in colloquial language, we should call *short.*"

"It is true," she replied with a smile. "I am wrong. It is not good manners; it is vulgar. In French you would call it inartistic. It is better to be frank than to harbor cold or hostile feelings towards a friend, and you have already proved yourself my friend. Perhaps I have gone too far with you.

You must have taken me to be a very ordinary woman." Rodolphe made many signs of denial. "Yes," said the bookseller's wife, going on without noticing this pantomime, which, however, she plainly saw. "I have detected that, and naturally I have reconsidered my conduct. Well! I will put an end to everything by a few words of deep truth. Understand this, Rodolphe: I feel in myself the strength to stifle a feeling if it were not in harmony with my ideas or anticipation of what true love is. I could love—as we can love in Italy, but I know my duty. No intoxication can make me forget it. Married without my consent to that poor old man, I might take advantage of the liberty he so generously gives me; but three years of married life imply acceptance of its laws. Hence the most vehement passion would never make me utter, even involuntarily, a wish to find myself free.

"Emilio knows my character. He knows that without my heart, which is my own, and which I might give away, I should never allow any one to take my hand. That is why I have just refused it to you. I desire to be loved and waited for with fidelity, nobleness, ardor, while all I can give is infinite tenderness of which the expression may not overstep the boundary of the heart, the permitted neutral ground. All this being thoroughly understood. Oh!" she went on with a girlish gesture, "I will be as coquettish, as gay, as glad, as a child who knows comparatively nothing of the dangers of familiarity."

This plain and frank declaration was made in a tone, an accent, and supported by a look which gave it the deepest stamp of truth.

"A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Is that," she answered with some haughtiness, "a reflection on the humbleness of my birth? Must your love flaunt a coat-of-arms? At Milan the noblest names are written over shop-doors: Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini;

there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe me, though I keep a shop, I have the feelings of a duchess."

"A reflection! Nay, madame, I meant it for praise."

"By comparison?" she said archly.

"Ah, once for all," said he, "not to torture me if my words should ill express my feelings, understand that my love is perfect; it carries with it absolute obedience and respect."

She bowed as a woman satisfied, and said, "Then monsieur accepts the treaty?"

"Yes," said he. "I can understand that in a rich and powerful feminine nature the faculty of loving ought not to be wasted, and that you, out of delicacy, wished to restrain it. Ah! Francesca, at my age tenderness requited, and by so sublime, so royally beautiful a creature as you are—why, it is the fulfillment of all my wishes. To love you as you desire to be loved—is not that enough to make a young man guard himself against every evil folly? Is it not to concentrate all his powers in a noble passion, of which in the future he may be proud, and which can leave none but lovely memories? If you could but know with what hues you have clothed the chain of Pilatus, the Rigi, and this superb lake——"

"I want to know," said she, with the Italian artlessness which has always a touch of artfulness.

"Well, this hour will shine on all my life like a diamond on a queen's brow."

Francesca's only reply was to lay her hand on Rodolphe's.

"Oh dearest! for ever dearest! Tell me, have you never loved?"

"Never."

"And you allow me to love you nobly, looking to heaven for the utmost fulfillment?" he asked.

She gently bent her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe's cheeks.

"Why! what is the matter?" she cried, abandoning her imperial manner.

"I have now no mother whom I can tell of my happiness; she left this earth without seeing what would have mitigated her agony——"

"What?" said she.

"Her tenderness replaced by an equal tenderness——"

"*Povero mio!*" exclaimed the Italian, much touched. "Believe me," she went on after a pause, "it is a very sweet thing, and to a woman, a strong element of fidelity to know that she is all in all on earth to the man she loves; to find him lonely, with no family, with nothing in his heart but his love—in short, to have him wholly to herself."

When two lovers thus understand each other, the heart feels delicious peace, supreme tranquillity. Certainty is the basis for which human feelings crave, for it is never lacking to religious sentiment; man is always certain of being fully repaid by God. Love never believes itself secure but by this resemblance to divine love. And the raptures of that moment must have been fully felt to be understood; it is unique in life; it can never return again, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman, to make her your human religion, the fount of life, the secret luminary of all your least thoughts!—is not this a second birth? And a young man mingles with this love a little of the feeling he had for his mother.

Rodolphe and Francesca for some time remained in perfect silence, answering each other by sympathetic glances full of thoughts. They understood each other in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenes of nature, whose glories, interpreted by the glory in their hearts, helped to stamp on their minds the most fugitive details of that unique hour. There had not been the slightest shade of frivolity in Francesca's conduct. It was noble, large, and without any second thought. This magnanimity struck Rodolphe greatly, for in it he recognized the difference between the Italian and the Frenchwoman. The waters, the land, the sky, the woman, all were grandiose

and suave, even their love in the midst of this picture, so vast in its expanse, so rich in detail, where the sternness of the snowy peaks and their hard folds standing clearly out against the blue sky reminded Rodolphe of the circumstances which limited his happiness: a lovely country shut in by snows.

This delightful intoxication of soul was destined to be disturbed. A boat was approaching from Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively, gave a joyful start, though faithful to her part as a mute. The bark came nearer; when at length Francesca could distinguish the faces on board, she exclaimed, "Tito!" as she perceived a young man. She stood up and remained standing at the risk of being drowned. "Tito! Tito!" cried she, impulsively waving her handkerchief.

Tito desired the boatmen to slacken, and the two boats pulled side by side. The Italian and Tito talked with such extreme rapidity, and in a dialect unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew even the Italian of books, that Rodolphe could neither hear nor guess the drift of this conversation. But Tito's handsome face, Francesca's familiarity, and Gina's expression of delight, all aggrieved him. And indeed no lover can help being ill pleased at finding himself neglected for another, whoever he may be. Tito tossed a little leather bag to Gina, full of gold, no doubt, and a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, with a farewell wave of the hand to Tito.

"Get quickly back to Gersau," she said to the boatmen. "I will not let my poor Emilio pine ten minutes longer than he need."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, as he saw Francesca finish reading the last letter.

"Liberty!" she exclaimed, with an artist's enthusiasm.

"And money," added Gina, like an echo, for she had found her tongue.

"Yes," said Francesca, "no more poverty! For more

than eleven months have I been working, and I was beginning to be tired of it. I am certainly not a literary woman."

"Who is this Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

"The secretary of state to the financial department of the humble shop of the Colonnas, in other words the son of our *ragionato*. Poor boy! he could not come by the Saint-Gothard, nor by the Mont-Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseilles, and had to cross France. Well, in three weeks we shall be in Geneva, and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe," she added, seeing sadness overspread the Parisian's face, "is not the Lake of Geneva quite as good as the Lake of Lucerne?"

"But allow me to bestow a regret on the Bergmanns' delightful house," said Rodolphe, pointing to the little promontory.

"Come and dine with us to add to your associations, *povero mio*," said she. "This is a great day; we are out of danger. My mother writes that within a year there will be an amnesty. Oh! *la cara patria!*"

These three words made Gina weep. "Another winter here," said she, "and I should have been dead!"

"Poor little Sicilian kid!" said Francesca, stroking Gina's head with an expression and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, even if it were without love.

The boat grounded; Rodolphe sprang on to the sand, offered his hand to the Italian lady, escorted her to the door of the Bergmanns' house, and went to dress and return as soon as possible.

When he joined the bookseller and his wife, who were sitting on the balcony, Rodolphe could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise at seeing the prodigious change which the good news had produced in the old man. He now saw a man of about sixty, extremely well preserved, a lean Italian, as straight as an I, with hair still black though thin and showing a white skull, with bright eyes, a full set of white teeth, a

face like Cæsar, and on his diplomatic lips a sardonic smile, the almost false smile under which a man of good breeding hides his real feelings.

"Here is my husband under his natural form," said Francesca gravely.

"He is quite a new acquaintance," replied Rodolphe, bewildered.

"Quite," said the bookseller; "I have played many a part, and know well how to make up. Ah! I played one in Paris under the Empire, with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantis *e tutte quanti.* Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even the most futile, is of use. If my wife had not received a man's education—an unheard-of thing in Italy—I should have been obliged to chop wood to get my living here. *Povera* Francesca! who would have told me that she would some day maintain me!"

As he listened to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, so hale, Rodolphe scented some mystification, and preserved the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

"*Che avete, signor?*" Francesca asked with simplicity. "Does our happiness sadden you?"

"Your husband is a young man," he whispered in her ear.

She broke into such a frank, infectious laugh that Rodolphe was still more puzzled.

"He is but sixty-five, at your service," said she; "but I can assure you that even that is something—to be thankful for!"

"I do not like to hear you jest about an affection so sacred as this, of which you yourself prescribed the conditions."

"*Zitto!*" said she, stamping her foot, and looking whether her husband were listening. "Never disturb the peace of mind of that dear man, as simple as a child, and with whom I can do what I please. He is under my protection," she added. "If you could know with what generosity he risked his life and fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not

share my political opinions. Is not that love, Monsieur Frenchman? But they are like that in his family. Emilio's younger brother was deserted for a handsome youth by the woman he loved. He thrust his sword through his own heart ten minutes after he had said to his servant, 'I could of course kill my rival, but it would grieve the *Diva* too deeply.'"

This mixture of dignity and banter, of haughtiness and playfulness, made Francesca at this moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner and the evening were full of cheerfulness, justified, indeed, by the relief of the two refugees, but depressing to Rodolphe.

"Can she be fickle?" he asked himself as he returned to the Stopfers' house. "She sympathized in my sorrow, and I cannot take part in her joy!"

He blamed himself, justifying this girl-wife.

"She has no taint of hypocrisy, and is carried away by impulse," thought he, "and I want her to be like a Parisian woman."

Next day and the following days—in fact, for twenty days after—Rodolphe spent all his time at the Bergmanns', watching Francesca without having determined to watch her. In some souls admiration is not independent of a certain penetration. The young Frenchman discerned in Francesca the imprudence of girlhood, the true nature of a woman as yet unbroken, sometimes struggling against her love, and at other moments yielding and carried away by it. The old man certainly behaved to her as a father to his daughter, and Francesca treated him with a deeply felt gratitude which roused her instinctive nobleness. The situation and the woman were to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, of which the solution attracted him more and more.

These last days were full of secret joys, alternating with melancholy moods, with tiffs and quarrels even more delightful than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca were of one

mind. And he was more and more fascinated by this tenderness apart from wit, always and in all things the same, an affection that was jealous of mere nothings—already!

"You care very much for luxury?" said he one evening to Francesca, who was expressing her wish to get away from Gersau, where she missed many things.

"I!" cried she. "I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Raphael, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the Bay of Naples. Emilio," she went on, "have I ever complained here during our days of privation?"

"You would not have been yourself if you had," replied the old man gravely.

"After all, is it not in the nature of plain folks to aspire to grandeur?" she asked, with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and at her husband. "Were my feet made for fatigue?" she added, putting out two pretty little feet. "My hands"—and she held one out to Rodolphe—"were those hands made to work? Leave us," she said to her husband; "I want to speak to him."

The old man went into the drawing-room with sublime good faith; he was sure of his wife.

"I will not have you come with us to Geneva," she said to Rodolphe. "It is a gossiping town. Though I am far above the nonsense the world talks, I do not choose to be calumniated, not for my own sake, but for his. I make it my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are leaving; stay here a few days. When you come on to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our great and unchangeable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you; you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you—you shall never discern in my conduct anything whatever that may arouse your jealousy."

She drew him into a corner of the balcony, kissed him on the forehead, and fled, leaving him in amazement.

Next day Rodolphe heard that the lodgers at the Bergmanns' had left at daybreak. It then seemed to him intolerable to remain at Gersau, and he set out for Vevay by the longest route, starting sooner than was necessary. Attracted to the waters of the lake where the beautiful Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva by the end of October. To avoid the discomforts of the town he took rooms in a house at Eaux-Vives, outside the walls. As soon as he was settled, his first care was to ask his landlord, a retired jeweler, whether some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to reside at Geneva.

"Not so far as I know," replied the man. "Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken Monsieur Jeanrenaud's place for three years; it is one of the finest on the lake. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and that of Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu, let to the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. Prince Colonna has come to see his daughter and his son-in-law, Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan, or if you like, a Sicilian, an old adherent of King Murat's, and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. Serious steps had to be taken, and the pope's interest in the Colonna family was invoked, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for the Prince and Princesse Gandolphini to live here. Geneva is anxious to do nothing to displease the Holy Alliance to which it owes its independence. *Our* part is not to ruffle foreign courts: there are many foreigners here, Russians and English."

"Even some Genevese?"

"Yes, monsieur, our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years at the Villa Diodati, which every one goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney."

"You cannot tell me whether within a week or so a bookseller from Milan has come with his wife—named Lamporani, one of the leaders of the last revolution?"

"I could easily find out by going to the Foreigners' Club," said the jeweler.

Rodolphe's first walk was very naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, whose recent death added to its attractiveness: for is not death the consecration of genius?

The road to Eaux-Vives follows the shore of the lake, and, like all the roads in Switzerland, is very narrow; in some spots, in consequence of the configuration of the hilly ground, there is scarcely space for two carriages to pass each other.

At a few yards from the Jeanrenauds' house, which he was approaching without knowing it, Rodolphe heard the sound of a carriage behind him, and, finding himself in a sunken road, he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road free. Of course he looked at the approaching carriage—an elegant English phaeton, with a splendid pair of English horses. He felt quite dizzy as he beheld in this carriage Francesca, beautifully dressed, by the side of an old lady as hard as a cameo. A servant blazing with gold lace stood behind. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled at seeing him like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which the lover followed with his eyes as he climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a country house, towards which he ran.

"Who lives here?" he asked of the gardener.

"Prince and Princess Colonna, and Prince and Princess Gandolphini."

"Have they not just driven in?"

"Yes, sir."

In that instant a veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes; he saw clearly the meaning of the past.

"If only this is her last piece of trickery!" thought the thunder-stricken lover to himself.

He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a whim, for he had heard what a *capriccio* might mean in an

Italian. But what a crime had he committed in the eyes of a woman—in accepting a born princess as a citizen's wife! in believing that a daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the middle ages was the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his blunders increased Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be ignored and repelled. He asked for Prince Gandolphini, sending in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came forward to meet him, welcomed him with the best possible grace, and took him to walk on a terrace whence there was a view of Geneva, the Jura, the hills covered with villas, and below them a wide expanse of the lake.

"My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see," he remarked, after pointing out the details to his visitor. "We have a sort of concert this evening," he added, as they returned to the splendid Villa Jeanrenaud. "I hope you will do me and the Princess the pleasure of seeing you. Two months of poverty endured in intimacy are equal to years of friendship."

Though he was consumed by curiosity, Rodolphe dared not ask to see the Princess; he slowly made his way back to Eaux-Vives, looking forward to the evening. In a few hours his passion, great as it had already been, was augmented by his anxiety and by suspense as to future events. He now understood the necessity for making himself famous, that he might some day find himself, socially speaking, on a level with his idol. In his eyes Francesca was made really great by the simplicity and ease of her conduct at Gersau. Princess Colonna's haughtiness, so evidently natural to her, alarmed Rodolphe, who would find enemies in Francesca's father and mother—at least, so he might expect; and the secrecy which Princess Gandolphini had so strictly enjoined on him now struck him as a wonderful proof of affection. By not choosing to compromise the future, had she not confessed that she loved him?

At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe could get into a car-

riage and say with an emotion that is very intelligible, "To the Villa Jeanrenaud—to Prince Gandolphini's."

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The Princess was standing quite near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so thick and long, was bound with a golden fillet. Her face, in the light of wax-candles, had the brilliant pallor peculiar to Italians, and which looks its best only by artificial light. She was in full evening dress, showing her fascinating shoulders, the figure of a girl and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, though there were some charming English and Russian ladies present, the prettiest women of Geneva, and other Italians, among them the dazzling and illustrious Princess Varese, and the famous singer Tinti, who was at that moment engaged in singing.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-post, looked at the Princess, turning on her the fixed, tenacious, attracting gaze, charged with the full, insistent will which is concentrated in the feeling called desire, and thus assumes the nature of a vehement command. Did the flame of that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting each instant to see Rodolphe? In a few minutes she stole a glance at the door, as though magnetized by this current of love, and her eyes, without reserve, looked deep into Rodolphe's. A slight thrill quivered through that superb face and beautiful body; the shock to her spirit reacted: Francesca blushed! Rodolphe felt a whole life in this exchange of looks, so swift that it can only be compared to a lightning flash. But to what could his happiness compare? He was loved. The lofty Princess, in the midst of her world, in this handsome villa, kept the pledge given by the disguised exile, the capricious beauty of Bergmanns' lodgings. The intoxication of such a moment enslaves a man for life! A faint smile, refined and subtle, candid and triumphant, curled Princess Gandolphini's lips, and at a moment when she did not feel herself observed she looked at

Rodolphe with an expression which seemed to ask his pardon for having deceived him as to her rank.

When the song was ended Rodolphe could make his way to the Prince, who graciously led him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremonial of a formal introduction to Princess and Prince Colonna, and to Francesca. When this was over, the Princess had to take part in the famous quartette, *Mi manca la voce*, which was sung by her with Tinti, with the famous tenor Genovese, and with a well-known Italian prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a prince, would have made him one of the princes of art.

"Take that seat," said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. "*Oimè!* I think there is some mistake in my name; I have for the last minute been Princess Rodolphini."

It was said with an artless grace which revived, in this avowal hidden beneath a jest, the happy days at Gersau. Rodolphe reveled in the exquisite sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, while sitting so close to her that one cheek was almost touched by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, at such a moment, *Mi manca la voce* is being sung, and by the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand what it was that brought the tears to Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as perhaps in all else, there are certain circumstances, trivial in themselves, but the outcome of a thousand little previous incidents, of which the importance is immense, as an epitome of the past and as a link with the future. A hundred times already we have felt the preciousness of the one we love; but a trifle—the perfect touch of two souls united during a walk perhaps by a single word, by some unlooked-for proof of affection—will carry the feeling to its supremest pitch. In short, to express this truth by an image which has been pre-eminently successful from the earliest ages of the world, there are in a long chain points of attachment

needed where the cohesion is stronger than in the intermediate loops of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, at this party, in the face of the world, was one of those intense moments which join the future to the past, and rivet a real attachment more deeply in the heart. It was perhaps of these incidental rivets that Bossuet spoke when he compared to them the rarity of happy moments in our lives—he who had such a living and secret experience of love.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love comes that of seeing her admired by every one else. Rodolphe was enjoying both at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and though Rodolphe's was already full, he added to it pearls of great price; smiles shed aside for him alone, stolen glances, tones in her singing which Francesca addressed to him alone, but which made Tinti pale with jealousy, they were so much applauded. All his strength of desire, the special expression of his soul, was thrown over the beautiful Roman, who became unchangeably the beginning and the end of all his thoughts and actions. Rodolphe loved as every woman may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, a tenacity, which made Francesca the very substance of his heart; he felt her mingling with his blood as purer blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul; she would henceforth underlie the least efforts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean lies beneath the waves. In short, Rodolphe's lightest aspiration was now a living hope.

At the end of a few days, Francesca understood this boundless love; but it was so natural, and so perfectly shared by her, that it did not surprise her. She was worthy of it.

"What is there that is strange?" said she to Rodolphe, as they walked on the garden terrace, when he had been betrayed into one of those outbursts of conceit which come so naturally to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings—"what is extraordinary in the fact of your loving a young and beautiful woman, artist enough to be able to earn her living like

Tinti, and of giving you some of the pleasures of vanity? What lout but would then become an Amadis? This is not in question between you and me. What is needed is that we both love faithfully, persistently; at a distance from each other for years, with no satisfaction but that of knowing that we are loved."

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "will you not consider my fidelity as devoid of all merit when you see me absorbed in the efforts of devouring ambition? Do you imagine that I can wish to see you one day exchange the fine name of Gandolphini for that of a man who is a nobody? I want to become one of the most remarkable men of my country, to be rich, great—that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna."

"I should be grieved to see you without such sentiments in your heart," she replied, with a bewitching smile. "But do not wear yourself out too soon in your ambitious labors. Remain young. They say that politics soon make a man old."

One of the rarest gifts in women is a certain gaiety which does not detract from tenderness. This combination of deep feeling with the lightness of youth added an enchanting grace at this moment to Francesca's charms. This is the key to her character; she laughs and she is touched; she becomes enthusiastic, and returns to arch raillery with a readiness, a facility, which make her the charming and exquisite creature she is, and for which her reputation is known outside Italy. Under the graces of a woman she conceals vast learning, thanks to the excessively monotonous and almost monastic life she led in the castle of the old Colonnas.

This rich heiress was at first intended for the cloister, being the fourth child of Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of her two brothers, and of her elder sister, suddenly brought her out of her retirement, and made her one of the most brilliant matches in the papal states. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest

landowners in Sicily; and Francesca was married to him instead, so that nothing might be changed in the position of the family. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried.

From the age of nine till she was sixteen, Francesca, under the direction of a cardinal of the family, had read all through the library of the Colonnas, to make weight against her ardent imagination by studying science, art, and letters. But in these studies she acquired the taste for independence and liberal ideas, which threw her, with her husband, into the ranks of the revolution. Rodolphe had not yet learned that, besides five living languages, Francesca knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature perfectly understood that, for a woman, the first condition of being learned is to keep it deeply hidden.

Rodolphe spent the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When spring returned, notwithstanding the infinite delights of the society of a clever woman, wonderfully well informed, young and lovely, the lover went through cruel sufferings, endured indeed with courage, but which were sometimes legible in his countenance, and betrayed themselves in his manners or speech, perhaps because he believed that Francesca shared them. Now and again it annoyed him to admire her calmness. Like an Englishwoman, she seemed to pride herself on expressing nothing in her face; its serenity defied love; he longed to see her agitated; he accused her of having no feeling, for he believed in the tradition which ascribes to Italian women a feverish excitability.

"I am a Roman!" Francesca gravely replied one day when she took quite seriously some banter on this subject from Rodolphe.

There was a depth of tone in her reply which gave it the appearance of scathing irony, and which set Rodolphe's pulses throbbing. The month of May spread before them the

treasures of her fresh verdure; the sun was sometimes as powerful as at midsummer. The two lovers happened to be at a part of the terrace where the rock rises abruptly from the lake, and where leaning over the stone parapet that crowns the wall above a flight of steps leading down to a landing-stage. From the neighboring villa, where there is a similar stairway, a boat presently shot out like a swan, its flag flaming, its crimson awning spread over a lovely woman comfortably reclining on red cushions, her hair wreathed with real flowers; the boatman was a young man dressed like a sailor, and rowing with all the more grace because he was under the lady's eye.

"They are happy!" exclaimed Rodolphe, with bitter emphasis. "Claire de Bourgogne, the last survivor of the only house which could ever vie with the royal family of France——"

"Oh! of a bastard branch, and that a female line."

"At any rate, she is Vicomtesse de Beauséant; and she did not——"

"Did not hesitate, you would say, to bury herself here with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil," replied the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a Frenchwoman; I am an Italian, my dear sir!"

Francesca turned away from the parapet, leaving Rodolphe, and went to the farther end of the terrace, whence there is a wide prospect of the lake. Watching her as she slowly walked away, Rodolphe suspected that he had wounded her soul, at once so simple and so wise, so proud and so humble. It turned him cold; he followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her to herself. But he did not heed the warning, and detected her wiping away her tears. Tears! in so strong a nature.

"Francesca," said he, taking her hand, "is there a single regret in your heart?"

She was silent, disengaged her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, and again dried her eyes.

"Forgive me!" he said. And with a rush, he kissed her eyes to wipe away the tears.

Francesca did not seem aware of his passionate impulse, she was so violently agitated. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he put his arm round her, clasped her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she freed herself by a dignified movement of offended modesty, and, standing a yard off, she looked at him without anger, but with firm determination.

"Go this evening," she said. "We meet no more till we meet at Naples."

The order was stern, but it was obeyed, for it was Francesca's will.

On his return to Paris, Rodolphe found in his rooms a portrait of Princess Gandolphini painted by Schinner, as Schinner can paint. The artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the Prince, anxious as he was for a portrait of his wife, would be able to conquer the great painter's objections; but Francesca, no doubt, had bewitched him, and obtained from him—which was almost a miracle—an original portrait for Rodolphe, and a duplicate for Emilio. She told him this in a charming and delightful letter, in which the mind indemnified itself for the reserve required by the worship of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, never to cease, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, and which was the only indulgence that they allowed themselves through the many years following.

Rodolphe, possessed by an ambition sanctified by his love, set to work. First he longed to make his fortune, and risked his all in an undertaking to which he devoted all his faculties as well as his capital; but he, an inexperienced youth, had to contend against duplicity, which won the day. Thus three

years were lost in a vast enterprise, three years of struggling and courage.

The Villèle ministry fell just when Rodolphe was ruined. The valiant lover thought he would seek in politics what commercial industry had refused him; but before braving the storms of this career, he went, all wounded and sick at heart, to have his bruises healed and his courage revived at Naples, where the Prince and Princess had been reinstated in their place and rights on the King's accession. This, in the midst of his warfare, was a respite full of delights; he spent three months at the Villa Gandolphini, rocked in hope.

Rodolphe then began again to construct his fortune. His talents were already known; he was about to attain the desires of his ambitions; a high position was promised him as the reward of his zeal, his devotion, and his past services, when the storm of July, 1830, broke, and again his bark was swamped.

She, and God! These are the only witnesses of the brave efforts, the daring attempts of a young man gifted with fine qualities, but to whom, so far, the protection of luck—the god of fools—has been denied. And this indefatigable wrestler, upheld by love, comes back to fresh struggles, lighted on his way by an always friendly eye, an ever-faithful heart.

Lovers! Pray for him!

As she finished this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville's cheeks were on fire; there was a fever in her blood. She was crying—but with rage. This little novel, inspired by the literary style then in fashion, was the first reading of the kind that Rosalie had ever had the chance of devouring. Love was depicted in it, if not by a master-hand, at any rate by a man who seemed to give his own impressions; and truth, even if unskilled, could not fail to touch a virgin soul. Here lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible agitation, of her fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna.

She never for an instant doubted the sincerity of this poetical flight; Albert had taken pleasure in telling the story of his passion, while changing the names of persons and perhaps of places. Rosalie was possessed by infernal curiosity. What woman but would, like her, have wanted to know her rival's name—for she too loved! As she read these pages, to her really contagious, she had said solemnly to herself, "I love him!" She loved Albert, and felt in her heart a gnawing desire to fight for him, to snatch him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music, and that she was not beautiful.

"He will never love me!" thought she.

This conclusion aggravated her anxiety to know whether she might not be mistaken, whether Albert really loved an Italian princess, and was loved by her. In the course of this fateful night, the power of swift decision, which had characterized the famous Watteville, was fully developed in his descendant. She devised those whimsical schemes, round which hovers the imagination of most young girls when, in the solitude to which some injudicious mothers confine them, they are aroused by some tremendous event which the system of repression to which they are subjected could neither foresee nor prevent. She dreamed of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into the garden of the house occupied by Albert; of taking advantage of the lawyer being asleep to look through the window into his private room. She thought of writing to him, or of bursting the fetters of Besançon society by introducing Albert to the drawing-room of the Hôtel de Rupt. This enterprise, which to the Abbé de Grancey even would have seemed the climax of the impossible, was a mere passing thought.

"Ah!" said she to herself, "my father has a dispute pending as to his land at les Rouxey. I will go there! If there is no lawsuit, I will manage to make one, and *he* shall come into our drawing-room!" she cried, as she sprang out of bed

and to the window to look at the fascinating gleam which shone through Albert's lights. The clock struck one; he was still asleep.

"I shall see him when he gets up; perhaps he will come to his window."

At this instant Mademoiselle de Watteville was witness to an incident which promised to place in her power the means of knowing Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the kiosk to help Jérôme, Albert's servant, to get across the coping of the wall and step into the little building. In Jérôme's accomplice Rosalie at once recognized Mariette the lady's maid.

"Mariette and Jérôme!" said she to herself. "Mariette, such an ugly girl! Certainly they must be ashamed of themselves."

Though Mariette was horribly ugly and six-and-thirty, she had inherited several plots of land. She had been seventeen years with Madame de Watteville, who valued her highly for her bigotry, her honesty, and long service, and she had no doubt saved money and invested her wages and perquisites. Hence, earning about ten louis a year, she probably had by this time, including compound interest and her little inheritance, not less than ten thousand francs.

In Jérôme's eyes ten thousand francs could alter the laws of optics; he saw in Mariette a neat figure; he did not perceive the pits and seams which virulent smallpox had left on her flat, parched face; to him the crooked mouth was straight; and ever since Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him so near to the Wattevilles' house, he had laid siege systematically to the maid, who was as prim and sanctimonious as her mistress, and who, like every ugly old maid, was far more exacting than the handsomest.

If the night-scene in the kiosk is thus fully accounted for to all perspicacious readers, it was not so to Rosalie, though she derived from it the most dangerous lesson that can be given,

that of a bad example. A mother brings her daughter up strictly, keeps her under her wing for seventeen years, and then, in one hour, a servant-girl destroys the long and painful work, sometimes by a word, often indeed by a gesture! Rosalie got into bed again, not without considering how she might take advantage of her discovery.

Next morning, as she went to mass accompanied by Mariette —her mother was not well—Rosalie took the maid's arm, which surprised the country wench not a little.

"Mariette," said she, "is Jérôme in his master's confidence?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle."

"Do not play the innocent with me," said Mademoiselle de Watteville drily. "You let him kiss you last night under the kiosk; I no longer wonder that you so warmly approved of my mother's ideas for the improvements she planned."

Rosalie could feel how Mariette was trembling by the shaking of her arm.

"I wish you no ill," Rosalie went on. "Be quite easy; I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can meet Jérôme as often as you please."

"But, mademoiselle," replied Mariette, "it is perfectly respectable; Jérôme honestly means to marry me——"

"But then," said Rosalie, "why meet at night?"

Mariette was completely dumfounded, and could make no reply.

"Listen, Mariette; I am in love too! In secret and without any return. I am, after all, my father's and mother's only child. You have more to hope for from me than from any one else in the world——"

"Certainly, mademoiselle, and you may count on us for life or death," exclaimed Mariette, rejoiced at the unexpected turn of affairs.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I will not marry Monsieur de Soulas; but one thing I will have,

and must have ; my help and favor are yours on one condition only."

"What is that?"

"I must see the letters which Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jérôme."

"But what for?" said Mariette in alarm.

"Oh! merely to read them, and you yourself shall post them afterwards. It will cause a little delay; that is all."

At this moment they went into church, and each of them, instead of reading the order of mass, fell into her own train of thought.

"Dear, dear, how many sins are there in all that?" thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, brain, and heart were completely upset by reading the story, by this time regarded it as history, written for her rival. By dint of thinking of nothing else, like a child, she ended by believing that the *Eastern Review* was no doubt forwarded to Albert's lady-love.

"Oh!" said she to herself, her head buried in her hands in the attitude of a person lost in prayer; "Oh! how can I get my father to look through the list of people to whom the *Review* is sent?"

After breakfast she took a turn in the garden with her father, coaxing and cajoling him, and brought him to the kiosk.

"Do you suppose, my dear little papa, that our *Review* is ever read abroad?"

"It is but just started——"

"Well, I will wager that it is."

"It is hardly possible."

"Just go and find out, and note the names of any subscribers out of France."

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter—

"I was right; there is not one foreign subscriber as yet. They hope to get some at Neufchâtel, at Berne, and at Geneva. One copy is, in fact, sent to Italy, but it is not paid for—to a Milanese lady at her country house at Belgirate, on Lago Maggiore."

"What is her name?"

"The Duchesse d'Argaiolo."

"Do you know her, papa?"

"I have heard about her. She was by birth a Princess Soderini, a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy."

Two days after, Mariette placed the following letter in Mademoiselle de Watteville's hands:

Albert Savaron to Léopold Hannequin.

"Yes, 'tis so, my dear friend; I am at Besançon, while you thought I was traveling. I would not tell you anything till success should begin, and now it is dawning. Yes, my dear Léopold, after so many abortive undertakings, over which I have shed the best of my blood, have wasted so many efforts, spent so much courage, I have made up my mind to do as you have done—to start on a beaten path, on the high-road, as the longest but the safest. I can see you jump with surprise in your lawyer's chair!

"But do not suppose that anything is changed in my personal life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, and that under the reservations *she* insists on. I did not tell you, my friend; but I was horribly weary of Paris. The outcome of the first enterprise, on which I had founded all my hopes, and which came to a bad end in consequence of the utter rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and fleece me—me, though everything was done by my energy

—made me give up the pursuit of a fortune after the loss of three years of my life. One of these years was spent in the law courts, and perhaps I should have come worse out of the scrape if I had not been made to study law when I was twenty.

"I made up my mind to go into politics solely, to the end that I may some day find my name in a list for promotion to the Senate under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and so revive in France a good name now extinct in Belgium—though indeed I am neither legitimate nor legitimized."

"Ah! I knew it! He is of noble birth!" exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

"You know how conscientiously I studied, how faithful and useful I was as an obscure journalist, and how excellent a secretary to the statesman who, on his part, was true to me in 1829. Flung to the depths once more by the revolution of July, just when my name was becoming known, at the very moment when, as master of appeals, I was about to find my place as a necessary wheel in the political machine, I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the fallen, and fighting for them, without them. Oh! why was I but three-and-thirty, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible? I concealed from you all my devotedness and my dangers. What would you have? I was full of faith. We should not have agreed.

"Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay and contented, writing my political articles, I was in despair; I foresaw my fate, at the age of thirty-seven, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the smallest fame, just having failed in a noble undertaking, the founding, namely, of a daily paper, answering only to a need of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment. I did not know which way to turn, and I felt my own value! I wandered about, gloomy and hurt, through the lonely places of Paris—

Paris which had slipped through my fingers—thinking of my crushed ambitions, but never giving them up. Oh, what frantic letters I wrote at that time to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes, I would say to myself, 'Why did I sketch so vast a programme of life? Why demand everything? Why not wait for happiness while devoting myself to some mechanical employment.'

"I then looked about me for some modest appointment by which I might live. I was about to get the editorship of a paper under a manager who did not know much about it, a man of wealth and ambition, when I took fright. 'Would *she* ever accept as her husband a man who had stooped so low?' I wondered.

"This reflection made me two-and-twenty again. But, oh, my dear Léopold, how the soul is worn by these perplexities! What must not caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions! They suffer what Napoleon suffered, not at Saint Helena, but on the Quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly while he could have quelled the insurrection; as he actually did, on the same spot, a little later, in Vendémiaire. Well, my life has been a torment of that kind, extending over four years. How many a speech to the Chamber have I not delivered in the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne! These wasted harangues have at any rate sharpened my tongue and accustomed my mind to formulate its ideas in words. And while I was undergoing this secret torture, you were getting married, you had paid for your business, you were made law-clerk to the mayor of your district, after gaining the cross for a wound at Saint-Merri.

"Now, listen. When I was a small boy and tortured cockchafers, the poor insects had one form of struggle which used almost to put me in a fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly but without getting away, though they could spread their wings. We used to say, 'They are mark-

ing time.' Now, was this sympathy? Was it a vision of my own future? Oh! to spread my wings and yet be unable to fly! That has been my predicament since that fine undertaking by which I was disgusted, but which has now made four families rich.

"At last, seven months ago, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris bar, seeing how many vacancies had been left by the promotion of several lawyers to eminent positions. But when I remembered the rivalry I had seen among men of the press, and how difficult it is to achieve anything of any kind in Paris, the arena where so many champions meet, I came to a determination painful to myself, but certain in its results, and perhaps quicker than any other. In the course of our conversations you had given me a picture of the society of Besançon, of the impossibility for a stranger to get on there, to produce the smallest effect, to get into society, or to succeed in any way whatever. It was there that I determined to set up my flag, thinking, and rightly, that I should meet with no opposition, but find myself alone to canvass for the election. The people of the Comté will not meet the outsider? The outsider will not meet them! They refuse to admit him to their drawing-rooms, he will never go there! He never shows himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class that elects the deputies—the commercial class. I am going especially to study commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will gain their lawsuits, I will effect compromises, I will be the greatest pleader in Besançon. By-and-by I will start a *Review*, in which I will defend the interests of the country, will create them, or preserve them, or resuscitate them. When I shall have won a sufficient number of votes, my name will come out of the urn. For a long time the unknown barrister will be treated with contempt, but some circumstance will arise to bring him to the front—some unpaid defense, or a case which no other pleader will undertake.

"Well, my dear Léopold, I packed up my books in eleven cases, I bought such law-books as might prove useful, and I sent everything off, furniture and all, by carrier to Besançon. I collected my diplomas, and I went to bid you good-bye. The mail-coach dropped me at Besançon, where, in three days' time, I chose a little set of rooms looking out over some gardens. I sumptuously arranged the mysterious private room where I spend my nights and days, and where the portrait of my divinity reigns—of her to whom my life is dedicated, who fills it wholly, who is the mainspring of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talents. Then, as soon as the furniture and books had come, I engaged an intelligent man-servant, and there I sat for five months like a hibernating marmot.

"My name had, however, been entered on the list of lawyers in the town. At last I was called one day to defend an unhappy wretch at the assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak for once! One of the most influential merchants of Besançon was on the jury; he had a difficult task to fulfill; I did my utmost for the man, and my success was absolute and complete. My client was innocent; I very dramatically secured the arrest of the real criminals, who had come forward as witnesses. In short, the court and the public were united in their admiration. I managed to save the examining magistrate's pride by pointing out the impossibility of detecting a plot so skillfully planned.

"Then I had to fight a case for my merchant, and won his suit. The Cathedral Chapter next chose me to defend a tremendous action against the town, which had been going on for four years; I won that. Thus after three trials, I had become the most famous advocate of Franche-Comté.

"But I bury my life in the deepest mystery, and so hide my aims. I have adopted habits which prevent my accepting any invitations. I am only to be consulted between six and eight in the morning; I go to bed after my dinner, and work

at night. The vicar-general, a man of parts, and very influential, who placed the chapter's case in my hands after they had lost it in the lower court, of course professed their gratitude. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I will win your suit, but I want no fee; I want more' (start of alarm on the abbé's part). 'You must know that I am a great loser by putting myself forward in antagonism to the town. I came here only to leave the place as deputy. I mean to engage only in commercial cases, because commercial men return the members; they will distrust me if I defend "the priests"—for to them you are simply the priests. If I undertake your defense, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a minister' (again a start of surprise on the part of my abbé), 'and master of appeals, under the name of Albert de Savarus' (another start). 'I have remained faithful to monarchical opinions; but, as you have not the majority of votes in Besançon, I must gain votes among the citizens. So the fee I ask of you is the votes you may be able secretly to secure for me at the opportune moment. Let us each keep our own counsel, and I will defend, for nothing, every case to which a priest of this diocese may be a party. Not a word about my previous life, and we will be true to each other.'

"When he came to thank me afterwards, he gave me a note for five hundred francs, and said in my ear, 'The votes are a bargain all the same.' I have in the course of five interviews made a friend, I think, of this vicar-general.

"Now I am overwhelmed with business, and I understand no cases but those brought me by merchants, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. This line of conduct attaches business men to me, and allows me to make friends with influential persons. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house to purchase in Besançon, so as to secure a qualification. I count on your lending me the necessary capital for this investment. If I should die, if I should fail, the loss would be too small to be any considera-

tion between you and me. You will get the interest out of the rental, and I shall take good care to lookout for something cheap, so that you may lose nothing by this mortgage, which is indispensable.

"Oh! my dear Léopold, no gambler with the last remains of his fortune in his pocket, bent on staking it at the Cercle des Etrangers for the last time one night, when he must come away rich or ruined, ever felt such a perpetual ringing in his ears, such a nervous moisture on his palms, such a fevered tumult in his brain, such inward qualms in his body as I go through every day now that I am playing my last card in the game of ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, for nearly ten years now have I been struggling. This battle with men and things, in which I have unceasingly poured out my strength and energy, and so constantly worn the springs of desire, has, so to speak, undermined my vitality. With all the appearance of a strong man of good health, I feel myself a wreck. Every day carries with it a shred of my inmost life. At every fresh effort I feel that I should never be able to begin again. I have no power, no vigor left but for happiness; and if it should never come to crown my head with roses, the *me* that is really me would cease to exist, I should be a ruined thing. I should wish for nothing more in the world. I should want to cease from living. You know that power and fame, the vast moral empire that I crave, is but secondary; it is to me only a means to happiness, the pedestal for my idol.

"To reach the goal and die, like the runner of antiquity! To see fortune and death stand on the threshold hand in hand! To win the beloved woman just when love is extinct! To lose the faculty of enjoyment after earning the right to be happy! Of how many men has this been the fate!

"But there surely is a moment when Tantalus rebels, crosses his arms, and defies hell, throwing up his part of the eternal dupe. That is what I shall come to if anything should thwart

my plan ; if, after stooping to the dust of provincial life, prowling like a starving tiger round these tradesmen, these electors, to secure their votes ; if, after wrangling in these squalid cases, and giving them my time—the time I might have spent on Lago Maggiore, seeing the waters she sees, basking in her gaze, hearing her voice—if, after all, I failed to scale the tribune and conquer the glory that should surround the name that is to succeed to that of Argaiolo ! Nay, more than this, Léopold ; there are days when I feel a heavy languor ; deep disgust surges up from the depths of my soul, especially when, abandoned to long day-dreams, I have lost myself in anticipation of the joys of blissful love ! May it not be that our desire has only a certain modicum of power, and that it perishes, perhaps, of a too lavish effusion of its essence ? For, after all, at this present, my life is fair, illuminated by faith, work, and love.

" Farewell, my friend ; I send love to your children, and beg you to remember me to your excellent wife. Yours,

" ALBERT."

Rosalie read this letter twice through, and its general purport was stamped on her heart. She suddenly saw the whole of Albert's previous existence, for her quick intelligence threw light on all the details, and enabled her to take it all in. By adding this information to the little novel published in the *Review*, she now fully understood Albert. Of course, she exaggerated the greatness, remarkable as it was, of this lofty soul and potent will, and her love for Albert thenceforth became a passion, its violence enhanced by all the strength of her youth, the weariness of her solitude, and the unspent energy of her character. Love is in a young girl the effect of a natural law ; but when her craving for affection is centred in an exceptional man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in a youthful heart. Thus Mademoiselle de Watteville had in a few days reached a morbid and very

dangerous stage of enamored infatuation. The Baroness was much pleased with her daughter, who, being under the spell of her absorbing thoughts, never resisted her will, seemed to be devoted to feminine occupations, and realized her mother's ideal of a docile daughter.

The lawyer was now engaged in court two or three times a week. Though he was overwhelmed with business he found time to attend the trials, call on litigious merchants, and conduct the *Review;* keeping up his personal mystery, from the conviction that the more covert and hidden was his influence, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, reading up the list of electors of Besançon, and finding out their interests, their characters, their various friendships and antipathies. Did ever a cardinal hoping to be made pope give himself more trouble?

One evening Mariette, on coming to dress Rosalie for an evening party, handed to her, not without many groans over this treachery, a letter of which the address made Mademoiselle de Watteville shiver and redden and turn pale again as she read the address:

To Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo
(*née Princesse Soderini*),
At Belgirate,
Lago Maggiore, ***Italy.***

In her eyes this direction blazed as the words *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,* did in the eyes of Belshazzar. After concealing the letter, Rosalie went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's; and as long as the endless evening lasted, she was tormented by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold; she had several times asked herself whether, if he knew of her crime, infamous inasmuch as it necessarily goes unpunished, the high-minded Albert could

esteem her. Her conscience answered an uncompromising "No."

She had expiated her sin by self-imposed penances; she fasted; she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, her arms outstretched for hours, and repeating prayers all the time. She had compelled Mariette to similar acts of repentance; her passion was mingled with genuine asceticism, and was all the more dangerous.

"Shall I read that letter, shall I not?" she asked herself, while listening to the Chavoncourt girls. One was sixteen, the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon her two friends as mere children because they were not secretly in love. "If I read it," she finally decided, after hesitating for an hour between yes and no, "it shall, at any rate, be the last. Since I have gone so far as to see what he wrote to his friend, why should I not know what he says to *her?* If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert! am I not your love?"

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the Duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

"25*th.*

"My dear Soul, all is well. To my other conquests I have just added an invaluable one: I have done a service to one of the most influential men who work the elections. Like the critics, who make other men's reputations but can never make their own, he makes deputies though he can never become one. The worthy man wanted to show his gratitude without loosening his purse-strings by saying to me, 'Would you care to sit in the Chamber? I can get you returned as deputy.'

"'If I ever made up my mind to enter on a political career,' replied I hypocritically, 'it would be to devote myself to the Comté, which I love, and where I am appreciated.'

"'Well,' he said, 'we will persuade you, and through you

we shall have weight in the Chamber, for you will distinguish yourself there.'

"And so, my beloved angel, say what you will, my perseverance will be rewarded. Ere long I shall, from the high-place of the French Tribune, come before my country, before Europe. My name will be flung to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

"Yes, as you tell me, I was old when I came to Besançon, and Besançon has aged me more; but, like Sixtus V., I shall be young again the day after my election. I shall enter on my true life, my own sphere. Shall we not then stand in the same line? Count Savaron de Savarus, ambassador I know not where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, the widow of the Duc d'Argaiolo! Triumph restores the youth of men who have been preserved by incessant struggles. Oh, my Life! with what gladness did I fly from my library to my private room, to tell your portrait of this progress before writing to you! Yes, the votes I can command, those of the vicar-general, of the persons I can oblige, and of this client, make my election already sure.

"*26th.*

"We have entered on the twelfth year since that blest evening when, by a look, the beautiful Duchess sealed the promises made by the exile Francesca. You, dear, are thirty-two, I am thirty-five; the dear Duke is seventy-seven—that is to say, ten years more than yours and mine put together, and he still keeps well! My patience is almost as great as my love, and indeed I need a few years yet to rise to the level of your name. As you see, I am in good spirits to-day, I can laugh; that is the effect of hope. Sadness or gladness, it all comes to me through you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that on which I saw you for the first time, when my life became one with yours as the earth turns to the light. *Qual pianto* are these eleven years, for this is the 26th of December, the anniversary of my arrival

at your villa on the Lake of Geneva. For eleven years have I been crying to you, while you shine like a star set too high for man to reach it.

"*27th.*

"No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I do not like that odious Milanese fashion of chatting at the Scala every evening with a dozen persons, among whom it is hard if no one says something sweet. To me solitude is like the lump of amber in whose heart an insect lives for ever in unchanging beauty. Thus the heart and soul of a woman remain pure and unaltered in the form of their first youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

"*28th.*

"Is your statue never to be finished? I should wish to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every possible form, to beguile my impatience. I still am waiting for the view of Belgirate from the south, and that of the balcony; these are all that I now lack. I am so extremely busy that to-day I can only write you nothing—but that nothing is everything. Was it not of nothing that God made the world? That nothing is a word, God's word: I love you!

"*30th.*

"Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality. So you found great pleasure in seeing all the details of our first acquaintance thus set down? Alas! even while disguising them I was sorely afraid of offending you. We had no stories, and a *Review* without stories is a beauty without hair. Not being inventive by nature, and in sheer despair, I took the only poetry in my soul, the only adventure in my memory, and pitched it in the key in which it would bear telling; nor did I ever cease to think of you while writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I cannot say from my pen. Did not the transformation of your fierce Sormano into Gina cause you to laugh?

"You ask after my health. Well, it is better than in Paris. Though I work enormously, the peacefulness of the surroundings has its effect on the mind. What really tries and ages me, dear angel, is the anguish of mortified vanity, the perpetual friction of Paris life, the struggle of rival ambitions. This peace is a balm.

"If you could imagine the pleasure your letter gives me!—the long, kind letter in which you tell me the most trivial incidents of your life. No! you women can never know to what a degree a true lover is interested in these trifles. It was an immense pleasure to see the pattern of your new dress. Can it be a matter of indifference to me to know what you wear? If your lofty brow is knit? If our writers amuse you? If Canalis' songs delight you? I read the books you read. Even to your boating on the lake; every incident touched me. Your letter is as lovely, as sweet as your soul! Oh! flower of heaven, perpetually adored, could I have lived without those dear letters, which for eleven years have upheld me in my difficult path like a light, like a perfume, like a steady chant, like some divine nourishment, like everything which can soothe and comfort life.

"Do not fail me! If you knew what anxiety I suffer the day before they are due, or the pain a day's delay can give me! Is she ill? Is *he?* I am midway between hell and paradise.

"*O mia cara diva*, keep up your music, exercise your voice, practice. I am enchanted with the coincidence of employments and hours by which, though separated by the Alps, we live by precisely the same rule. The thought charms me and gives me courage. The first time I undertook to plead here—I forgot to tell you this—I fancied that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the flash of inspiration which lifts the poet above mankind. If I am returned to the Chamber—oh! you must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance there!

"*30th, Evening.*

"Good heavens, how I love you! Alas! I have intrusted too much to my love and my hopes. An accident which should sink that overloaded bark would end my life! For three years now I have not seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so wildly that I am forced to stop. To see you, to hear that girlish caressing voice! To embrace in my gaze that ivory skin, glistening under the candlelight, and through which I can read your noble mind! To admire your fingers playing on the keys, to drink in your whole soul in a look, in the tone of an *Oimè* or an *Alberto!* To walk by the blossoming orange trees, to live a few months in the bosom of that glorious scenery! That is life. What folly it is to run after power, a name, fortune! But at Belgirate there is everything; there is poetry, there is glory! I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as that dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, live there as *cavaliere servente*, only our passion was too fierce to allow of it.

"Farewell, my angel, forgive me my next fit of sadness in consideration of this cheerful mood; it has come as a beam of light from the torch of Hope, which has hitherto seemed to me a will-o'-the-wisp."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter, which seemed heavy in her hand. "After eleven years, to write like this!"

"Mariette," said Mademoiselle de Watteville to her maid next morning, "go and post this letter. Tell Jérôme that I know all I wished to know, and that he is to serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess our sins, you and I, without saying to whom the letters belonged, nor to whom they were going. I was in the wrong; I alone am guilty."

"Mademoiselle has been crying?" said Mariette, noticing Rosalie's eyes.

"Yes, but I do not want that my mother should perceive it; give me some very cold water."

In the midst of the storms of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of conscience. Touched by the beautiful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, telling herself that there was nothing left to her but to be resigned, and to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, submissive to fate, looking to God for everything, without allowing themselves any criminal acts or wishes. She felt a better woman, and had a certain sense of satisfaction after coming to this resolution, inspired by the natural rectitude of youth. And she was confirmed in it by a girl's idea: She was sacrificing herself for *him*.

"She does not know how to love," thought she. "Ah! if it were I—I would give up everything to a man who loved me so. To be loved! When, by whom shall I be loved? That little Monsieur de Soulas only loves my money; if I were poor, he would not even look at me."

"Rosalie, my child, what are you thinking about? You are working beyond the outline," said the Baroness to her daughter, who was making worsted-work slippers for the Baron.

Rosalie spent the winter of 1834–35 torn by secret tumult; but in the spring, in the month of April, when she reached the age of nineteen, she sometimes thought that it would be a fine thing to triumph over a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude the prospect of this struggle had fanned her passion and her evil thoughts. She encouraged her romantic daring by making plan after plan. Although such characters are an exception, there are, unfortunately, too many Rosalies in the world, and this story contains a moral which ought to serve them as a warning.

In the course of this winter Albert Savaron had quietly made considerable progress in Besançon. Most confident of success, he now impatiently awaited the dissolution of the

Chamber. Among the men of the moderate party he had won the suffrages of one of the makers of Besançon, a rich contractor, who had very wide influence.

Wherever they settled the Romans took immense pains, and spent enormous sums to have an unlimited supply of good water in every town of their empire. At Bensaçon they drank the water from Arcier, a hill at some considerable distance from Besançon. The town stands in a horseshoe circumscribed by the river Doubs. Thus, to restore an aqueduct in order to drink the same water that the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurdities which only succeed in a country place where the most exemplary gravity prevails. If this whim could be brought home to the hearts of the citizens, it would lead to considerable outlay, and this expenditure would benefit the influential contractor.

Albert Savaron de Savarus opined that the water of the river was good for nothing but to flow under a suspension bridge, and that the only drinkable water was that from Arcier. Articles were printed in the *Review* which merely expressed the views of the commercial interest of Besançon. The nobility and the citizens, the moderates and the legitimists, the government party and the opposition, everybody, in short, was agreed that they must drink the same water as the Romans, and boast of a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besançon. At Besançon—as in the matter of the two railways to Versailles—as for every standing abuse—there were private interests unconfessed which gave vital force to this idea. The reasonable folk in opposition to this scheme, who were indeed but few, were regarded as old women. No one talked of anything but of Savaron's two projects. And thus, after eighteen months of underground labor, the ambitious lawyer had succeeded in stirring to its depths the most stagnant town in France, the most unyielding to foreign influence, in finding the length of its foot, to use a vulgar phrase, and exerting a preponderant

influence without stirring from his own room. He had solved the singular problem of how to be powerful without being popular.

In the course of this winter he won seven lawsuits for various priests of Besançon. At moments he could breathe freely at the thought of his coming triumph. This intense desire, which made him work so many interests and devise so many springs, absorbed the last strength of his terribly overstrung soul. His disinterestedness was lauded, and he took his clients' fees without comment. But this disinterestedness was, in truth, moral usury; he counted on a reward far greater to him than all the gold in the world.

In the month of October, 1834, he had bought, ostensibly to serve a merchant who was in difficulties, with money loaned him by Léopold Hannequin, a house which gave him a qualification for election. He had not seemed to seek or desire this advantageous bargain.

"You are really a remarkable man," said the Abbé de Grancey, who, of course, had watched and understood the lawyer. The vicar-general had come to introduce to him a canon who needed his professional advice. "You are a priest who has taken the wrong turning." This observation struck Savaron.

Rosalie, on her part, had made up her mind, in her strong girl's head, to get Monsieur de Savaron into the drawing-room and acquainted with the society of the Hôtel de Rupt. So far she had limited her desires to seeing and hearing Albert. She had compounded, so to speak, and a composition is often no more than a truce.

Les Rouxey, the inherited estate of the Wattevilles, was worth just ten thousand francs a year; but in other hands it would have yielded a great deal more. The Baron in his indifference—for his wife was to have, and in fact had, forty thousand francs a year—left the management of Les Rouxey to a sort of factotum, an old servant of the Wattevilles named

Modinier. Nevertheless, whenever the Baron and his wife wished to go out of the town, they went to Les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The château and the park were, in fact, created by the famous Watteville, who in his active old age was passionately attached to this magnificent spot.

Between two precipitous hills—little peaks with bare summits known as the great and the little Rouxey—in the heart of a ravine where the torrents from the heights, with the Dent de Vilard at their head, come tumbling to join the lovely upper waters of the Doubs, Watteville had a huge dam constructed, leaving two cuttings for the overflow. Above this dam he made a beautiful lake, and below it two cascades; and these, uniting a few yards below the falls, formed a lovely little river to irrigate the barren, uncultivated valley, hitherto devastated by the torrent. This lake, this valley, and these two hills he enclosed in a ring fence, and built himself a retreat on the dam, which he widened to two acres by accumulating above it all the soil which had to be removed to make a channel for the river and the irrigation canals.

When the Baron de Watteville thus obtained the lake above his dam he was owner of the two hills, but not of the upper valley thus flooded, through which there had been at all times a right-of-way to where it ends in a horseshoe under the Dent de Vilard. But this ferocious old man was so widely dreaded, that so long as he lived no claim was urged by the inhabitants of Riceys, the little village on the farther side of the Dent de Vilard. When the Baron died, he left the slopes of the two Rouxey hills joined by a strong wall, to protect from inundation the two lateral valleys opening into the valley of Rouxey, to the right and left at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. Thus he died the master of the Dent de Vilard.

His heirs asserted their protectorate of the village of Riceys, and so maintained the usurpation. The old assassin, the old renegade, the old Abbé Watteville, ended his career

by planting trees and making a fine road over the shoulder of one of the Rouxey hills to join the high-road. The estate belonging to this park and house was extensive, but badly cultivated; there were chalets on both hills and neglected forests of timber. It was all wild and deserted, left to the care of nature, abandoned to chance growths, but full of sublime and unexpected beauty. You may now imagine Les Rouxey.

It is unnecessary to complicate this story by relating all the prodigious trouble and the inventiveness stamped with genius by which Rosalie achieved her end without allowing it to be suspected. It is enough to say that it was in obedience to her mother that she left Besançon in the month of May, 1835, in an antique traveling carriage drawn by a pair of sturdy hired horses, and accompanied her father to Les Rouxey.

To a young girl love lurks in everything. When she rose, the morning after her arrival, Mademoiselle de Watteville saw from her bedroom window the fine expanse of water, from which the light mists rose like smoke, and were caught in the firs and larches, rolling up and along the hills till they reached the heights, and she gave a cry of admiration.

"They loved by the lakes! *She* lives by a lake! A lake is certainly full of love!" she thought.

A lake fed by snows has opalescent colors and a translucency that make it one huge diamond; but when it is shut in like that of Les Rouxey, between two granite masses covered with pines, when silence broods over it like that of the Savannahs or the Steppes, then every one must exclaim as Rosalie did.

"We owe that," said her father, "to the notorious Watteville."

"On my word," said the girl, "he did his best to earn forgiveness. Let us go in a boat to the farther end; it will give us an appetite for breakfast."

The Baron called two gardener lads who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister, Modinier. The lake

was about six acres in breadth, in some places ten or twelve, and four hundred in length. Rosalie soon found herself at the upper end shut in by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of that little Switzerland.

"Here we are, Monsieur le Baron," said Modinier, signing to the gardeners to tie up the boat; "will you come and look?"

"Look at what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh, nothing!" exclaimed the Baron. "But you are a sensible girl; we have some little secrets between us, and I may tell you what ruffles my mind. Some difficulties have arisen since 1830 between the village authorities of Riceys and me, on account of this very Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle the matter without your mother knowing anything about it, for she is stubborn; she is capable of flinging fire and flames broadcast, particularly if she should hear that the mayor of Riceys, a Republican, got up this action as a sop to his people."

Rosalie had presence of mind enough to disguise her delight, so as to work more effectually on her father.

"What action?" said she.

"Mademoiselle, the people of Riceys," said Modinier, "have long enjoyed the right of grazing and cutting fodder on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonnit, the mayor since 1830, declares that the whole Dent belongs to his district, and maintains that a hundred years ago, or more, there was a way through our grounds. You understand that in that case we should no longer have them to ourselves. Then this barbarian would end by saying, what the old men in the village say, that the ground occupied by the lake was appropriated by the Abbé de Watteville. That would be the end of Les Rouxey; what next?"

"Indeed, my child, between ourselves, it is the truth," said Monsieur de Watteville simply. "The land is an usurpation, with no title-deed but lapse of time. And, therefore, to

avoid all worry, I should wish to come to a friendly understanding as to my border-line on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and I will then raise a wall."

"If you give way to the municipality, it will swallow you up. You ought to have threatened Riceys."

"That is just what I told the master last evening," said Modinier. "But in confirmation of that view I proposed that he should come to see whether, on this side of the Dent or on the other, there may not be, high or low, some traces of an enclosure."

For a century the Dent de Vilard had been used by both parties without coming to extremities; it stood as a sort of party wall between the communes of Riceys and Les Rouxey, yielding little profit. Indeed, the object in dispute, being covered with snow for six months in the year, was of a nature to cool their ardor. Thus it required all the hot blast by which the revolution of 1830 inflamed the advocates of the people to stir up this matter, by which Monsieur Chantonnit, the mayor of Riceys, hoped to give a dramatic turn to his career on the peaceful frontier of Switzerland, and to immortalize his term of office. Chantonnit, as his name shows, was a native of Neufchâtel.

"My dear father," said Rosalie, as they got into the boat again, "I agree with Modinier. If you wish to secure the joint possession of the Dent de Vilard, you must act with decision and get a legal opinion which will protect you against this enterprising Chantonnit. Why should you be afraid? Get the famous lawyer Savaron—engage him at once, lest Chantonnit should place the interests of the village in his hands. The man who won the case for the chapter against the town can certainly win that of Watteville *versus* Riceys! Besides," she added, "Les Rouxey will some day be mine—not for a long time yet, I trust. Well, then, do not leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I like this place; I shall often live here, and add to it as much as possible. On those banks," and

she pointed to the feet of the two hills, "I shall cut flower-beds and make the loveliest English gardens. Let us go to Besançon and bring back with us the Abbé de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron, and my mother, if she cares to come. You can then make up your mind; but in your place I should have done so already. Your name is Watteville, and you are afraid of a fight! If you should lose your case—well, I will never reproach you by a word!"

"Oh, if that is the way you take it," said the Baron, "I am quite ready; I will see the lawyer."

"Besides, a lawsuit is really great fun. It brings some interest into life, with coming and going and raging over it. You will have a great deal to do before you can get hold of the judges. We did not see the Abbé de Grancey for three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the very existence of the chapter was involved," said Monsieur de Watteville; "and then the archbishop's pride, his conscience, everything that makes up the life of the priesthood, were at stake. That Savaron does not know what he did for the chapter! He saved it!"

"Listen to me," said his daughter in his ear, "if you secure Monsieur de Savaron, you will gain your suit, won't you? Well, then, let me advise you. You cannot get at Monsieur Savaron excepting through Monsieur de Grancey. Take my word for it, and let us together talk to the dear abbé, without my mother's presence at the interview, for I know a way of persuading him to bring the lawyer to us."

"It will be very difficult to avoid mentioning it to your mother!"

"The Abbé de Grancey will settle that afterwards. But just make up your mind to promise your vote to Monsieur Savaron at the next election, and you will see!"

"Go to the election! take the oath?" cried the Baron de Watteville.

"What then?" said she.

"And what will your mother say?"

"She may even desire you to do it," replied Rosalie, knowing as she did from Albert's letter to Léopold how deeply the vicar-general had pledged himself.

Four days after, the Abbé de Grancey called very early one morning on Albert de Savaron, having announced his visit the day before. The old priest had come to win over the great lawyer to the house of the Watteville, a proceeding which shows how much tact and subtlety Rosalie must have employed in an underhand way.

"What can I do for you, Monsieur le Vicaire-Général?" asked Savaron.

The abbé, who told his story with admirable frankness, was coldly heard by Albert.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "it is out of the question that I should defend the interests of the Wattevilles, and you shall understand why. My part in this town is to remain perfectly neutral. I will display no colors; I must remain a mystery till the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Wattevilles would mean nothing in Paris, but here! Here, where everything is discussed, I should be supposed by every one to be an ally of your Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What! do you suppose that you can remain unknown on the day of the election, when the candidates must oppose each other? It must then become known that your name is Savaron *de Savarus*, that you have held the appointment of master of appeals, that you supported the Restoration!"

"On the day of the election," said Savaron, "I will be all I am expected to be; and I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings."

"If you have the support of Monsieur de Watteville and his party, you will get a hundred votes in a mass, and far more to be trusted than those on which you rely. It is always possible to produce division of interests; convictions are inseparable."

"The deuce is in it!" said Savaron. "I am attached to you, and I could do a great deal for you, father! Perhaps we may compound with the devil. Whatever Monsieur de Watteville's business may be, by engaging Girardet, and prompting him, it will be possible to drag the proceedings out till the elections are over. I will not undertake to plead till the day after I am returned."

"Do this one thing," said the abbé. "Come to the Hôtel de Rupt: there is a young person of nineteen there who, one of these days, will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and you can seem to be paying your court to her——"

"Ah! the young lady I sometimes see in the kiosk?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie," replied the Abbé de Grancey. "You are ambitious. If she takes a fancy to you, you may be everything an ambitious man can wish—who knows? A minister perhaps. A man can always be a minister who adds a hundred thousand francs a year to your amazing talents."

"Monsieur l'Abbé, if Mademoiselle de Watteville had three times her fortune, and adored me into the bargain, it would be impossible that I should marry her——"

"You are married?" exclaimed the abbé.

"Not in church nor before the mayor, but morally speaking," said Savaron.

"That is even worse when a man cares about it as you seem to care," replied the abbé. "Some things that are done can be undone. Do not stake your fortune and your prospects on a woman's liking, any more than a wise man counts on a dead man's shoes before starting on his way."

"Let us say no more about Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Albert gravely, "and agree as to the facts. At your desire—for I have a regard and respect for you—I will appear for Monsieur de Watteville, but after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct the case under my instructions. That is the utmost I can do."

"But there are questions involved which can only be settled after careful inspection of the localities," said the vicar-general.

"Girardet can go," said Savaron. "I cannot allow myself, in the face of a town I know so well, to take any step which might compromise the supreme interests that lie beyond my election."

The abbé left Savaron after giving him a keen look, in which he seemed to be laughing at the young athlete's uncompromising politics, while admiring his firmness.

"Ah! I would have dragged my father into a lawsuit—I would have done anything to get him here!" cried Rosalie to herself, standing in the kiosk and looking at the lawyer in his room, the day after Albert's interview with the abbé, who had reported the result to her father. "I would have committed any mortal sin, and you will not enter the Watteville's' drawing-room; I may not hear your fine voice! You make conditions when your help is required by the Watteville and the Rupts! Well, God knows, I meant to be content with these small joys; with seeing you, hearing you speak, going with you to Les Rouxey, that your presence might to me make the place sacred. That was all I asked. But now—now I mean to be your wife. Yes, yes; look at *her* portrait, at *her* drawing-room, *her* bedroom, at the four sides of *her* villa, the points of view from *her* gardens. You expect her statue? I will make her marble herself towards you! After all, the woman does not love. Art, science, books, singing, music, have absorbed half her senses and her intelligence. She is old, too; she is past thirty; my Albert will not be happy!"

"What is the matter that you stay here, Rosalie?" asked her mother, interrupting her reflections. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the drawing-room, and he observed your attitude, which certainly betrays more thoughtfulness than is due at your age."

"Then is Monsieur de Soulas a foe to thought?" asked Rosalie.

"Then you were thinking?" said Madame de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"Why, no! you were not thinking. You were staring at that lawyer's window with an attention that is neither becoming nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas, of all men, ought never to have observed."

"Why?" said Rosalie.

"It is time," said the Baroness, "that you should know what our intentions are. Amédée likes you, and you will not be unhappy as Comtesse de Soulas."

Rosalie, as white as a lily, made no reply, so completely was she stupefied by contending feelings. And yet, in the presence of the man she had this instant begun to hate vehemently, she forced the kind of smile which a ballet-dancer puts on for the public. Nay, she could even laugh; she had the strength to conceal her rage, which presently subsided, for she was determined to make use of this fat simpleton to further her designs.

"Monsieur Amédée," said she, at a moment when her mother was walking ahead of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people together, "were you not aware that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?"

"A Legitimist?"

"Until 1830 he was master of appeals to the Council of State, attached to the Supreme Ministerial Council, and in favor with the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would be very good of you to say nothing against him, but it would be better still if you would attend the election this year, carry the day, and hinder that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besançon."

"What sudden interest have you in this Savaron?"

"Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus, the natural son of the Comte de Savarus—pray keep the secret of my indis-

cretion—if he is returned deputy, will be our advocate in the suit about Les Rouxey. Les Rouxey, my father tells me, will be my property; I intend to live there, it is a lovely place! I should be broken-hearted at seeing that fine piece of the great de Watteville's work destroyed."

"The devil!" thought Amédée, as he left the house. "The heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks her."

Monsieur de Chavoncourt is a Royalist, of the famous 221. Hence, from the day after the revolution of July, he always preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oaths and resisting the present order of things, after the pattern of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the wit to divide in their opinions, and to trust to the force of inertia, and to Providence. Monsieur de Chavoncourt was not wholly trusted by his own party, but seemed to the Moderates the best man to choose; they preferred the triumph of his half-hearted opinions to the acclamation of a Republican who should combine the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots.

Monsieur de Chavoncourt, highly respected in Besançon, was the representative of an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, was not an offense to anybody, especially as he had a son and three daughters. With such a family, fifteen thousand francs a year are a mere nothing. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of the family is above bribery, it would be hard if the electors did not esteem him. Electors wax enthusiastic over a *beau ideal* of parliamentary virtue, just as the audience in the pit do at the representation of the generous sentiments they so little practice.

Madame de Chavoncourt, at this time a woman of forty, was one of the beauties of Besançon. While the Chamber was sitting, she lived meagrely in one of their country places to recoup herself by economy for Monsieur de Chavoncourt's

expenses in Paris. In the winter she received very creditably once a week, on Tuesdays, understanding her business as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, a youth of two-and-twenty, and another young gentleman, named Monsieur de Vauchelles, no richer than Amédée and his school-friend, were his intimate allies. They made excursions together to Granvelle, and sometimes went out shooting; they were so well-known to be inseparable that they were invited to the country together.

Rosalie, who was intimate with the Chavoncourt girls, knew that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if Monsieur de Soulas should repeat her words, it would be to his two companions. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his matrimonial plans, as Amédée had his; he wished to marry Victoire, the eldest of the Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt was to settle an estate worth seven thousand francs a year, and a hundred thousand francs in hard cash, when the contract should be signed. Victoire was this aunt's god-daughter and favorite niece. Consequently, young Chavoncourt and his friend Vauchelles would be sure to warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the danger he was in from Albert's candidature.

But this did not satisfy Rosalie. She sent the préfet of the department a letter written with her left hand, signed "*A friend to Louis Philippe*," in which she informed him of the secret intentions of Monsieur Albert Savaron, pointing out the serious support a Royalist orator might give to Berryer, and revealing to him the deeply artful course pursued by the lawyer during his two years' residence at Besançon. The préfet was a capable man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, devoted by conviction to the government of July—in short, one of those men of whom, in the Rue de Grenelle, the Minister of the Interior could say, "We have a capital préfet at Besançon." The préfet read the letter, and, in obedience to its instructions, he burnt it.

Rosalie aimed at preventing Albert's election, so as to keep him five years longer at Besançon.

At that time an election was a fight between parties, and in order to win, the ministry chose its ground by choosing the moment when it would give battle. The elections were therefore not to take place for three months yet. When a man's whole life depends on an election, the period that elapses between the issuing of the writs for convening the electoral bodies and the day fixed for their meetings is an interval during which ordinary vitality is suspended. Rosalie fully understood how much latitude Albert's absorbed state would leave her during these three months. By promising Mariette —as she afterwards confessed—to take both her and Jérôme into her service, she induced the maid to bring her all the letters Albert might send to Italy, and those addressed to him from that country. And all the time she was pondering these machinations, the extraordinary girl was working slippers for her father with the most innocent air in the world. She even made a greater display than ever of candor and simplicity, quite understanding how valuable that candor and innocence would be to her ends.

"My daughter grows quite charming!" said Madame de Watteville.

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher senior, composed of the contractor who expected to get the work for the acqueduct for the Arcier waters; of Monsieur Boucher's father-in-law; of Monsieur Granet, the influential man for whom Savaron had done a service, and who was to nominate him as a candidate; of Girardet the lawyer; of the printer of the *Eastern Review;* and of the president of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the assembly consisted of twenty-seven persons in all, men who in the provinces are regarded as bigwigs. Each man represented on an average six votes, but in estimating their value they said ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their own influ-

ence. Among these twenty-seven was one who was wholly devoted to the préfet, one false brother who secretly looked for some favor from the ministry, either for himself or for some one belonging to him.

At this preliminary meeting, it was agreed that Savaron the lawyer should be named as candidate, a motion received with such enthusiasm as no one looked for from Besançon. Albert, waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to fetch him, was chatting with the Abbé de Grancey, who was interested in this absorbing ambition. Albert had appreciated the priest's vast political capacities; and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaties, had been willing to become his guide and adviser in this culminating struggle. The chapter did not love Monsieur de Chavoncourt, for it was his wife's brother-in-law, as president of the Tribunal, who had lost the famous suit for them in the lower court.

"You are betrayed, my dear fellow," said the shrewd and worthy abbé, in that gentle, calm voice which old priests acquire.

"Betrayed!" cried the lawyer, struck to the heart.

"By whom I know not at all," the priest replied. "But at the préfecture your plans are known, and your hand read like a book. At this moment I have no advice to give you. Such affairs need consideration. As for this evening, take the bull by the horns, anticipate the blow. Tell them all your previous life, and thus you will mitigate the effect of the discovery on the good folks of Besançon."

"Oh, I was prepared for it," said Albert in a broken voice.

"You would not benefit by my advice; you had the opportunity of making an impression at the Hôtel de Rupt; you do not know the advantage you would have gained——"

"What?"

"The unanimous support of the Royalists, an immediate readiness to go to the election—in short, above a hundred votes. Adding to these what, among ourselves, we call the

ecclesiastical vote, though you were not yet nominated, you were master of the votes by ballot. Under such circumstances, a man may temporize, may make his way——"

Alfred Boucher when he came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the preliminary meeting, found the vicar-general and the lawyer cold, calm, and grave.

"Good-night, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Albert. "We will talk of your business at greater length when the elections are over."

And he took Alfred's arm, after pressing Monsieur de Grancey's hand with meaning. The priest looked at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the lofty expression which a general may have when he hears the first gun fired for a battle. He raised his eyes to heaven, and left the room, saying to himself, "What a priest he would make!"

Eloquence is not at the bar. The pleader rarely puts forth the real powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Eloquence is, nowadays, rarely in the pulpit; but it is found on certain occasions in the Chamber of Deputies, when an ambitious man stakes all to win all, or, stung by a myriad of darts, at a given moment bursts into speech. But it is still more certainly found in some privileged beings, at the inevitable hour when their claims must either triumph or be wrecked, and when they are forced to speak. Thus at this meeting, Albert Savaron, feeling the necessity of winning himself some supporters, displayed all the faculties of his soul and the resources of his intellect. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness, without cowardice, quite gravely, and was not dismayed at finding himself among twenty or thirty men. The news of the meeting and of its determination had already brought a few docile sheep to follow the bell.

Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was about to deluge him with a speech announcing the decision of the Boucher Committee, Albert begged for silence, and, as he

shook hands with Monsieur Boucher, tried to warn him, by a sign, of an unexpected danger.

"My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just announced to me the honor you have done me. But before that decision is irrevocable," said the lawyer, "I think that I ought to explain to you who and what your candidate is, so as to leave you free to take back your word if my declarations should disturb your conscience!"

This exordium was followed by profound silence. Some of the men thought it showed a noble impulse.

Albert gave a sketch of his previous career, telling them his real name, his action under the Restoration, and revealing himself as a new man since his arrival at Besançon, while pledging himself for the future. This address held his hearers breathless, it was said. These men, all with different interests, were spellbound by the brilliant eloquence that flowed at boiling heat from the heart and soul of this ambitious spirit. Admiration silenced reflection. Only one thing was clear—the thing which Albert wished to get into their heads—

Was it not far better for the town to have one of those men who are born to govern society at large than a mere voting-machine? A statesman carries power with him. A commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, is but a conscience. What a glory for Provence to have found a Mirabeau, to return the only statesman since 1830 that the revolution of July had produced!

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the audience believed it great enough to become a splendid political instrument in the hands of their representative. They all saw in Albert Savaron, Savarus the great Minister. And, reading the secret calculations of his constituents, the clever candidate gave them to understand that they would be the first to enjoy the right of profiting by his influence.

This confession of faith, this ambitious programme, this retrospect of his life and character was, according to the only

man present who was capable of judging of Savaron (he has since become one of the leading men of Besançon), a masterpiece of skill and of feeling, of fervor, interest, and fascination. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never had any man had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a weapon only for close warfare, has only an immediate effect. Reflection kills the word when the word ceases to overpower reflection. If the votes had then been taken, Albert's name would undoubtedly have come out of the ballot-box. At the moment, he was conqueror. But he must conquer every day for two months.

Albert went home quivering. The townsfolk had applauded him, and he had achieved the great point of silencing beforehand the malignant talk to which his early career might give rise. The commercial interest of Besançon had unanimously nominated the lawyer, Albert Savaron de Savarus, as its candidate.

Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, at first infectious, presently became blundering.

The préfet, alarmed by this success, set to work to count the ministerial votes, and contrived to have a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, so as to effect a coalition in their common interests. Every day, without Albert being able to discover how, the voters in the Boucher Committee diminished in number.

Nothing could resist the slow grinding of the préfecture. Three or four clever men would say to Albert's clients, "Will the deputy defend you and win your lawsuits? Will he give you advice, draw up your contracts, arrange your compromises? He will be your slave for five years longer, if, instead of returning him to the Chamber, you only hold out the hope of his going there five years hence."

This calculation did Savaron all the more mischief, because the wives of some of the merchants had already made it. The parties interested in the matter of the bridge and that of

the water from Arcier could not hold out against a talking-to from a clever ministerialist, who proved to them that their safety lay at the préfecture, and not in the hands of an ambitious man. Each day was a check for Savaron, though each day the battle was led by him and fought by his lieutenants—a battle of words, speeches, and proceedings. He dared not go to the vicar-general, and the vicar-general never showed himself. Albert rose and went to bed in a fever, his brain on fire.

At last the day dawned of the first struggle, practically the show of hands; the votes are counted, the candidates estimate their chances, and clever men can prophesy their failure or success. It is a decent hustings, without the mob, but formidable; agitation, though it is not allowed any physical display, as it is in England, is not the less profound. The English fight these battles with their fists, the French with hard words. Our neighbors have a scrimmage, the French try their fate by cold combinations calmly worked out. This particular political business is carried out in opposition to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party named their candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt came forward; then Albert appeared, and was accused by the Chavoncourt Committee and the Radicals of being an uncompromising man of the Right, a second Berryer. The ministry had their candidate, a stalking-horse, useful only to receive the purely ministerial votes. The votes, thus divided, gave no result. The Republican candidate had twenty, the Ministry got fifty, Albert had seventy, Monsieur de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the préfet's party had perfidiously made thirty of its most devoted adherents vote for Albert, so as to deceive the enemy. The votes for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, added to the eighty votes—the real number—at the disposal of the préfecture would carry the election, if only the préfet could succeed in gaining over a few of the Radicals. A hundred and sixty votes were not

recorded: those of Monsieur de Grancey's following and the Legitimists.

The show of hands at an election, like a dress rehearsal at a theatre, is the most deceptive thing in the world. Albert Savaron came home, putting a brave face on the matter, but half-dead. He had had the wit, the genius, or the good-luck to gain, within the last fortnight, two staunch supporters—Girardet's father-in-law and a very shrewd old merchant to whom Monsieur de Grancey had sent him. These two worthy men, his self-appointed spies, affected to be Albert's most ardent opponents in the hostile camp. Towards the end of the show of hands they informed Savaron, through the medium of Monsieur Boucher, that thirty voters, unknown, were secretly working against him in his party, playing the same sharp trick that they were playing for his benefit on the other side.

A criminal marching to execution could not suffer as Albert suffered as he went home from the hall where his fate was at stake. The despairing lover could endure no companionship. He walked through the streets alone, between eleven o'clock and midnight. At one in the morning, Albert, to whom sleep had been unknown for the past three days, was sitting in his library in a deep armchair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands hanging limp, in a forlorn attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears hung on his long lashes, tears that dim the eyes, but do not fall; fierce thought drinks them up, the fire of the soul consumes them. Alone, he might weep. And then, under the kiosk, he saw a white figure, which reminded him of Francesca.

"And for three months I have had no letter from her! What has become of her? I have not written for two months, but I warned her. Is she ill? Oh my love! My life! Will you ever know what I have gone through? What a wretched constitution is mine! Have I an aneurism?" he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulses seemed



"SHE WAS ONE OF THOSE WOMEN WHO ARE BORN TO REIGN!"

audible in the silence like little grains of sand dropping on a big drum,

At this moment three distinct taps sounded on his door; Albert hastened to open it, and almost fainted with joy at seeing the vicar-general's cheerful and triumphant mien. Without a word, he threw his arms round the Abbé de Grancey, held him fast, and clasped him closely, letting his head fall on the old man's shoulder. He was a child again; he cried as he had cried on hearing that Francesca Soderini was a married woman. He betrayed his weakness to no one but to this priest, on whose face shone the light of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as shrewd as he was sublime.

"Forgive me, dear abbé, but you come at one of those moments when the man vanishes, for you are not to think me vulgarly ambitious."

"Oh! I know," replied the abbé. "You wrote '*Ambition for love's sake!*' Ah! my son, it was love in despair that made me a priest in 1786, at the age of two-and-twenty. In 1788 I was in charge of a parish. I know life. I have refused three bishoprics already; I mean to die at Besançon."

"Come and see her!" cried Savaron, seizing a candle, and leading the abbé into the handsome room where hung the portrait of the Duchess d'Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

"She is one of those women who are born to reign!" said the vicar-general, understanding how great an affection Albert showed him by this mark of confidence. "But there is pride on that brow; it is implacable; she would never forgive an insult! It is the Archangel Michael, the angel of execution, the inexorable angel. 'All or nothing' is the motto of this type of angel. There is something divinely pitiless in that head."

"You have guessed well," cried Savaron. "But, my dear abbé, for more than twelve years now she has reigned over my life, and I have not a single thought for which to blame myself——"

"Ah! if you could only say the same of God!" said the priest with simplicity. "Now, to talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a real politician, this time you will follow my advice. You would not be where you are now if you would have gone to the Watteville when I first told you. But you must go there to-morrow; I will take you in the evening. The Rouxey estates are in danger; the case must be defended within three days. The election will not be over in three days. They will take good care not to appoint examiners the first day. There will be several voting days, and you will be elected by ballot——"

"How can that be?" asked Savaron.

"By winning the Rouxey lawsuit you will gain eighty Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty I can command, and you have a hundred and ten. Then, as twenty remain to you of the Boucher Committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all."

"Well," said Albert, "we must get seventy-five more."

"Yes," said the priest, "since all the rest are ministerial. But, my son, you have two hundred votes, and the préfecture no more than a hundred and eighty."

"I have two hundred votes?" said Albert, standing stupid with amazement, after starting to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

"You have those of Monsieur de Chavoncourt," said the abbé.

"How?" said Albert.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," the priest repeated coldly.

"But you see—she is inexorable," said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," said the abbé calmly for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The vicar-general would not be implicated in the scheme which at last smiled on the despairing politician. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity and honor.

"To-morrow evening at the Hôtel de Rupt you will meet Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You can thank her beforehand for what she is going to do for you, and tell her that your gratitude is unbounded, that you are hers body and soul, that henceforth your future is that of her family. You are quite disinterested, for you have so much confidence in yourself that you regard the nomination as deputy as a sufficient fortune.

"You will have a struggle with Madame de Chavoncourt; she will want you to pledge your word. All your future life, my son, lies in that evening. But, understand clearly, I have nothing to do with it. I am answerable only for the Legitimist voters; I have secured Madame de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will both vote for you, have won over the young men; Madame de Watteville will get the old ones. As to my electors, they are infallible."

"And who on earth has gained over Madame de Chavoncourt?" asked Savaron.

"Ask me no questions," replied the abbé. "Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, is not capable of increasing his wealth. Though Vauchelles marries the eldest without anything from her father, because her old aunt is to settle something on her, what is to become of the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and your ambition is as good as a gold mine. Some one has told Madame de Chavoncourt that she will do better by getting her daughter married than by sending her husband to waste his money in Paris. That some one manages Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt manages her husband."

"That is enough, my dear abbé. I understand. When

once I am returned as deputy, I have somebody's fortune to make, and by making it large enough I shall be released from my promise. In me you have a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. Great heavens! what have I done to deserve so true a friend?"

"You won a triumph for the chapter," said the vicar-general, smiling. "Now, as to all this, be as secret as the tomb. We are nothing, we have done nothing. If we were known to have meddled in election matters, we should be eaten up alive by the Puritans of the Left—who do worse—and blamed by some of our own party, who want everything. Madame de Chavoncourt has no suspicion of my share in all this. I have confided in no one but Madame de Watteville, whom we may trust as we trust ourselves."

"I will bring the Duchess to you to be blessed!" cried Savaron.

After seeing out the old priest, Albert went to bed in the swaddling-clothes of power.

Next evening, as may well be supposed, by nine o'clock Madame la Baronne de Watteville's rooms were crowded by the aristocracy of Besançon in convocation extraordinary. They were discussing the exceptional step of going to the poll, to oblige the daughter of the de Rupts. It was known that the former master of appeals, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers under the elder branch, was to be presented that evening. Madame de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, exquisitely dressed, while her elder sister, secure of her lover, had not indulged in any of the arts of the toilet. In country towns these little things are remarked. The Abbé de Grancey's fine and clever head was to be seen moving from group to group, listening to everything, seeming to be apart from it all, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up a question and direct the issue.

"If the elder branch were to return," said he to an old

statesman of seventy, "what politicians would they find?" "Berryer, alone on his bench, does not know which way to turn; if he had sixty votes, he would often scotch the wheels of the government and upset ministries!" "The Duc de Fitz-James is to be nominated at Toulouse." "You will enable Monsieur de Watteville to win his lawsuit." "If you vote for Monsieur Savaron, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the Moderates!" etc., etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was disposed to regard such delay as an impertinence.

"My dear Baroness," said Madame de Chavoncourt, "do not let such serious issues turn on such a trifle. The varnish on his boots is not dry—or a consultation, perhaps, detains Monsieur de Savaron."

Rosalie shot a side glance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

"She is very lenient to Monsieur de Savaron," she whispered to her mother.

"You see," said the Baroness, with a smile, "there is a question of a marriage between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savaron."

Mademoiselle de Watteville hastily went to a window looking out over the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savaron had not yet appeared. The storm that threatened now burst. Some of the gentlemen sat down to cards, finding the thing intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and exclaimed aloud in his amazement, "He must be dead!"

The vicar-general stepped out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. In Albert's rooms all was dark; not a light was to be seen.

"Jérôme!" cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the yard below. The abbé looked at her with astonishment. "Where

in the world is your master?" she asked the man, who came to the foot of the wall.

"Gone—in a post-chaise, mademoiselle."

"He is ruined!" exclaimed the Abbé de Grancey, "or he is happy!"

The joy of triumph was not so effectually concealed on Rosalie's face that the vicar-general could not detect it. He affected to see nothing.

"What can this girl have had to do with this business?" he asked himsélf.

They all three returned to the drawing-room, where Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange, the extraordinary, the prodigious news of the lawyer's departure, without any reason assigned for his evasion. By half-past eleven only fifteen persons remained, among them Madame de Chavancourt and the Abbé de Godenars, another vicar-general, a man of about forty, who hoped for a bishopric; the two Chavoncourt girls and Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédée de Soulas, and a retired magistrate, one of the most influential members of the upper circle of Besançon, who had been very eager for Albert's election. The Abbé de Grancey sat down by the Baroness in such a position as to watch Rosalie, whose face, usually pale, wore a feverish flush.

"What can have happened to Monsieur de Savaron?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

At this moment a servant in livery brought in a letter for the Abbé de Grancey on a silver tray.

"Pray read it," said the Baroness de Watteville, with manifest interest.

The vicar-general read the letter; he saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her kerchief.

"She recognizes the writing," said he to himself, after glancing at the girl over his spectacles. He folded up the letter, and calmly put it in his pocket without a word. In

three minutes he had met three looks from Rosalie which were enough to make him guess everything.

"She is in love with Albert Savaron!" thought the vicar-general.

He rose and took leave. He was going towards the door when, in the next room, he was overtaken by Rosalie, who said—

"Monsieur de Grancey, it was from Albert!"

"How do you know that it was his writing, to recognize it from so far?"

The girl's reply, caught as she was in the toils of her impatience and rage, seemed to the abbé sublime.

"I love him! What is the matter?" she said after a pause.

"He gives up the election."

Rosalie put her finger to her lip.

"I ask you to be as secret as if it were a confession," said she before returning to the drawing-room. "If there is an end of the election, there is an end of the marriage with Sidonie."

In the morning, on her way to mass, Mademoiselle de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which had prompted Albert's disappearance at the most critical moment of his life.

"Mademoiselle, an old gentleman from Paris arrived yesterday morning at the Hôtel National; he came in his own carriage with four horses, and a courier in front, and a servant. Indeed, Jérôme, who saw the carriage returning, declares he could only be a prince or a *milord*."

"Was there a coronet on the carriage?" asked Rosalie.

"I do not know," said Mariette. "Just as two was striking he came to call on Monsieur Savaron, and sent in his card; and when he saw it, Jérôme says Monsieur turned as pale as a sheet, and said he was to be shown in. As he himself locked

the door, it is impossible to tell what the old gentleman and the lawyer said to each other; but they were together above an hour, and then the old gentleman, with the lawyer, called up his servant. Jérôme saw the servant go out again with an immense package, four feet long, which looked like a great painting on canvas. The old gentleman had in his hand a large parcel of papers. Monsieur Savaron was paler than death, and he, so proud, so dignified, was in a state to be pitied. But he treated the old gentleman so respectfully that he could not have been politer to the king himself. Jérôme and Monsieur Albert Savaron escorted the gentleman to his carriage, which was standing with the horses in. The courier started on the stroke of three.

"Monsieur Savaron went straight to the préfecture, and from that to Monsieur Gentillet, who sold him the old traveling carriage that used to belong to Madame de Saint-Vier before she died; then he ordered post-horses for six o'clock. He went home to pack; no doubt he wrote a lot of letters; finally, he settled everything with Monsieur Girardet, who went to him and stayed till seven. Jérôme carried a note to Monsieur Boucher, with whom his master was to have dined; and then, at half-past seven, the lawyer set out, leaving Jérôme with three months' wages, and telling him to find another place.

"He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, whom he took home, and at his house, Jérôme says, he took a plate of soup, for at half-past seven Monsieur Girardet had not yet dined. When Monsieur Savaron got into the carriage again he looked like death. Jérôme, who, of course, saw his master off, heard him tell the postillion 'The Geneva Road!'"

"Did Jérôme ask the name of the stranger at the Hôtel National?"

"As the old gentleman did not mean to stay, he was not asked for it. The servant, by his orders no doubt, pretended not to speak French."

"And the letter which came so late to the Abbé de Grancey?" said Rosalie.

"It was Monsieur Girardet, no doubt, who ought to have delivered it; but Jérôme says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who was much attached to lawyer Savaron, was as much upset as he was. So he who came so mysteriously, as Mademoiselle Galard says, is gone away just as mysteriously."

After hearing this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville fell into a brooding and absent mood, which everybody could see. It is useless to say anything of the commotion that arose in Besançon on the disappearance of Monsieur Savaron. It was understood that the prefect had obliged him with the greatest readiness by giving him at once a passport across the frontier, for he was thus quit of his only opponent. Next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was carried to the top by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

"Jack is gone by the way he came," said an elector on hearing of Albert Savaron's flight.

This event lent weight to the prevailing prejudice at Besançon against strangers; indeed, two years previously they had received confirmation from the affair of the Republican newspaper. Ten days later Albert de Savaron was never spoken of again. Only three persons—Girardet the attorney, the vicar-general, and Rosalie—were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the vicar-general; but Rosalie, better informed than either of them, had known for three months past that the Duc d'Argaiolo was dead.

In the month of April, 1836, no one had had any news from or of Albert de Savaron. Jérôme and Mariette were to be married, but the Baroness confidentially desired her maid to wait till her daughter was married, saying that the two weddings might take place at the same time.

"It is time that Rosalie should be married," said the

Baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville. "She is nineteen, and she is fearfully altered in these last months."

"I do not know what ails her," said the Baron.

"When fathers do not know what ails their daughters, mothers can guess," said the Baroness; "we must get her married."

"I am quite willing," said the Baron. "I shall give her Les Rouxey now that the court has settled our quarrel with the authorities of Riceys by fixing the boundary line at three hundred feet up the side of the Dent de Vilard. I am having a trench made to collect all the water and carry it into the lake. The village did not appeal, so the decision is final."

"It has never yet occurred to you," said Madame de Watteville, "that this decision cost me thirty thousand francs handed over to Chantonnit. That peasant would take nothing else; he sold us peace. If you give away Les Rouxey, you will have nothing left," said the Baroness.

"I do not need much," said the Baron; "I am breaking up."

"You eat like an ogre!"

"Just so. But however much I may eat, I feel my legs get weaker and weaker——"

"It is from working the lathe," said his wife.

"I do not know," said he.

"We will marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you give her Les Rouxey, keep the life interest. I will give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the funds. Our children can live here; I do not see that they are much to be pitied."

"No. I shall give them Les Rouxey out and out. Rosalie is fond of Les Rouxey."

"You are a queer man with your daughter! It does not occur to you to ask me if I am fond of Les Rouxey."

Rosalie, at once sent for, was informed that she was to marry Monsieur de Soulas one day early in the month of May.

"I am very much obliged to you, mother, and to you too, father, for having thought of settling me; but I do not mean to marry; I am very happy with you."

"Mere speeches!" said the Baroness. "You are not in love with Monsieur de Soulas, that is all."

"If you insist on the plain truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas——"

"Oh! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!" retorted her mother, with a bitter smile.

"The *never* of Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Rosalie with firm decision. "My father, I imagine, has no intention of making me marry against my wishes?"

"No, indeed no!" said the poor Baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"Very well!" said the Baroness, sternly controlling the rage of a bigot startled at finding herself unexpectedly defied, "you yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, may take the responsibility of settling your daughter. Consider well, Mademoiselle, for if you do not marry to my mind you will get nothing out of me!"

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and her husband, who took his daughter's part, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the summer at Les Rouxey; life at the Hôtel de Rupt was unendurable. It thus became known in Besançon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused the Comte de Soulas.

After their marriage Mariette and Jérôme came to Les Rouxey to succeed Modinier in due time. The Baron restored and repaired the house to suit his daughter's taste. When she heard that these improvements had cost about sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building a conservatory, the Baroness understood that there was a leaven of spite in her daughter. The Baron purchased various outlying plots, and a little estate worth thirty thousand francs. Madame de Watteville was told that, away from her,

Rosalie showed masterly qualities, that she was taking steps to improve the value of Les Rouxey, that she had treated herself to a riding-habit and rode about; her father, whom she made very happy, who no longer complained of his health, and who was growing fat, accompanied her in her expeditions. As the Baroness' name-day drew near—her name was Louise—the vicar-general came one day to Les Rouxey, deputed, no doubt, by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas, to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

"That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders," said the folk of Besançon.

After handsomely paying up the ninety thousand francs spent on Les Rouxey, the Baroness allowed her husband a thousand francs a month to live on; she would not put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly willing to return to Besançon for the 15th of August, and to remain there till the end of the month.

When, after dinner, the vicar-general took Mademoiselle de Watteville apart, to open the question of the marriage, by explaining to her that it was vain to think any more of Albert, of whom they had had no news for a year past, he was stopped at once by a sign from Rosalie. The strange girl took Monsieur de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, whence there was a view of the lake.

"Listen, dear abbé," said she. "You whom I love as much as my father, for you had an affection for my Albert, I must at last confess that I committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband. Here; read this."

She held out to him a number of the *Gazette* which she had in her apron pocket, pointing out the following paragraph under the date of Florence, May 25th:

"The wedding of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, the former ambassador, to Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, *née* Princess Soderini, was solemnized

with great splendor. Numerous entertainments given in honor of the marriage are making Florence gay. The Duchess' fortune is one of the finest in Italy, for the late Duke left her everything."

"The woman he loved is married," said she. "I divided them."

"You? How?" asked the abbé.

Rosalie was about to reply, when she was interrupted by a loud cry from two of the gardeners, following on the sound of a body falling into the water; she started, and ran off screaming, "Oh! father!" The Baron had disappeared.

In trying to reach a piece of granite on which he fancied he saw the impression of a shell, a circumstance which would have contradicted some system of geology, Monsieur de Watteville had gone down the slope, lost his balance, and slipped into the lake, which, of course, was deepest close under the roadway. The men had the greatest difficulty in enabling the Baron to catch hold of a pole pushed down at the place where the water was bubbling, but at last they pulled him out, covered with mud, in which he had sunk; he was getting deeper and deeper in, by dint of struggling. Monsieur de Watteville had dined heavily, digestion was in progress, and was thus checked.

When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in such evident danger that two servants at once set out on horseback: one to ride to Besançon, and the other to fetch the nearest doctor and surgeon. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the first medical aid from Besançon, they found Monsieur de Watteville past all hope, in spite of the intelligent treatment of the Rouxey doctor. The fright had produced serious effusion on the brain, and the shock to the digestion was helping to kill the poor man.

This death, which would never have happened, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had stayed at Besançon, was ascribed by her to her daughter's obstinacy. She took an

aversion for Rosalie, abandoning herself to grief and regrets that were evidently exaggerated. She spoke of the Baron as "her dear lamb!"

The last of the Watteville was buried on an island in the lake at Les Rouxey, where the Baroness had a little Gothic monument erected of white marble, like that called the tomb of Héloïse at Père-Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe the mother and daughter had settled in the Hôtel de Rupt, where they lived in savage silence. Rosalie was suffering from real sorrow, which had no visible outlet; she accused herself of her father's death, and she feared another disaster, much greater in her eyes, and very certainly her own work; neither Girardet the attorney nor the Abbé de Grancey could obtain any information concerning Albert. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of repentance she felt that she must confess to the vicar-general the horrible machinations by which she had separated Francesca and Albert. They had been simple, but formidable. Mademoiselle de Watteville had intercepted Albert's letters to the Duchess as well as that in which Francesca announced her husband's illness, warning her lover that she could write to him no more during the time while she was devoted, as was her duty, to the care of the dying man. Thus, while Albert was wholly occupied with election matters, the Duchess had written him only two letters; one in which she told him that the Duc d'Argaiolo was in danger, and one announcing her widowhood—two noble and beautiful letters, which Rosalie kept back.

After several nights' labor she succeeded in imitating Albert's writing very perfectly. She had substituted three letters of her own writing for three of Albert's, and the rough copies which she showed to the old priest made him shudder—the genius of evil was revealed in them to such perfection. Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, had prepared the Duchess for a change in the Frenchman's feelings, falsely representing

him as faithless, and she had answered the news of the Duc d'Argaiolo's death by announcing the marriage ere long of Albert and Mademoiselle de Watteville. The two letters, intended to cross on the road, had, in fact, done so. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so much astonished the vicar-general that he read them a second time. Francesca, stabbed to the heart by a girl who wanted to kill love in her rival, had answered the last in these four words: "You are free. Farewell."

"Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most atrocious and detestable," said the abbé severely. "God often punishes them on earth; herein lies the reason of the terrible catastrophes which to us seem inexplicable. Of all secret crimes buried in the mystery of private life, the most disgraceful is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or of reading it surreptitiously. Every one, whoever it may be, and urged by whatever reason, who is guilty of such an act has stained his honor beyond retrieving.

"Do you not feel all that is touching, that is heavenly in the story of the youthful page, falsely accused, and carrying the letter containing the order for his execution, who sets out without a thought of ill, and whom Providence protects and saves—miraculously, we say! But do you know wherein the miracle lies? Virtue has a glory as potent as that of innocent childhood.

"I say these things not meaning to admonish you," said the old priest, with deep grief. "I, alas! am not your spiritual director; you are not kneeling at the feet of God; I am your friend, appalled by dread of what your punishment may be. What has become of that unhappy Albert? Has he, perhaps, killed himself? There was tremendous passion under his assumption of calm. I understand now that old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchess d'Argaiolo, came here to take back his daughter's letters and portraits. This was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, and he went

off, no doubt, to try to justify himself. But how is it that in fourteen months he has given us no news of himself?"

"Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy!"

"Happy? He does not love you. Besides, you have no great fortune to give him. Your mother detests you; you made her a fierce reply which rankles, and which will be your ruin. When she told you yesterday that obedience was the only way to repair your errors, and reminded you of the need for marrying, mentioning Amédée—'If you are so fond of him, marry him yourself, mother!'—Did you, or did you not, fling these words in her teeth?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Well, I know her," Monsieur de Grancey went on. "In a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will be sure to have children; she will give Monsieur de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; she will benefit him in other ways, and reduce your share of her fortune as much as possible. You will be poor as long as she lives, and she is but eight-and-thirty! Your whole estate will be the land of Les Rouxey, and the small share left to you after your father's legal debts are settled, if indeed, your mother should consent to forego her claims on Les Rouxey. From the point of view of material advantages, you have done badly for yourself; from the point of view of feeling, I imagine you have wrecked your life. Instead of going to your mother——" Rosalie shook her head fiercely.

"To your mother," the priest went on, "and to religion, where you would, at the first impulse of your heart, have found enlightenment, counsel and guidance, you chose to act in your own way, knowing nothing of life, and listening only to passion!"

These words of wisdom terrified Mademoiselle de Watteville.

"And what ought I to do now?" she asked after a brief pause.

"To repair your wrongdoing, you must ascertain its extent," said the abbé.

"Well, I will write to the only man who can know anything of Albert's fate, Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, his friend from childhood."

"Write no more, unless to do honor to truth," said the vicar-general. "Place the real and the false letters in my hands, confess everything in detail as though I were the keeper of your conscience, asking me how you may expiate your sins, and doing as I bid you. I shall see—for, above all things, restore this unfortunate man to his innocence in the eyes of the woman he had made his divinity on earth. Though he has lost his happiness, Albert must still hope for justification."

Rosalie promised to obey the abbé, hoping that the st ps he might take would perhaps end in bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after Mademoiselle de Watteville's confession a clerk came to Besançon from Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, armed with a power of attorney from Albert; he called first on Monsieur Girardet, begging his assistance in selling the house belonging to Monsieur Savaron. The attorney undertook to do this out of friendship for Albert. The clerk from Paris sold the furniture, and with the proceeds could repay some money owed by Savaron to Girardet, who, on the occasion of his inexplicable departure, had lent him five thousand francs while undertaking to collect his assets. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome and noble pleader, to whom he had been much attached, the clerk replied that no one knew but his master, and that the notary had seemed greatly distressed by the contents of the last letter he had received from Monsieur Albert de Savaron.

On hearing this, the vicar-general wrote to Léopold. This was the worthy notary's reply:

"To Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

"PARIS.

"Alas, monsieur, it is in nobody's power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has renounced it. He is a novice in the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse near Grenoble. You know, better than I who have but just learned it, that on the threshold of that cloister everything dies. Albert, foreseeing that I should go to him, placed the general of the order between my utmost efforts and himself. I know his noble soul well enough to be sure that he is the victim of some odious plot unknown to us; but everything is at an end. The Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have carried severity to an extreme. At Belgirate, which she had left when Albert flew thither, she had left instructions leading him to believe that she was living in London. From London Albert went in search of her to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she was now engaged to the Duc de Rhétoré. When Albert succeeded in seeing Madame d'Argaiolo, at Florence, it was at the ceremony of her marriage.

"Our poor friend swooned in church, and even when he was in danger of death he could never obtain any explanation from this woman, who must have had I know not what in her heart. For seven months Albert had traveled in pursuit of a cruel creature who thought it sport to escape him; he knew not where or how to catch her.

"I saw him on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him, as I did, you would have felt that not a word might be spoken about the Duchess, at the risk of bringing on an attack which might have wrecked his reason. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found means to justify himself; but being falsely accused of being married!—what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead to the world. He longed for rest; let us hope that the deep silence and prayer into which he has thrown himself may give him happiness in another

guise. You, monsieur, who have known him, must greatly pity him ; and pity his friends also.

"Yours, etc."

As soon as he received this letter the good vicar-general wrote to the general of the Carthusian order, and this was the letter he received from Albert Savaron :

"Brother Albert to Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

"La Grande Chartreuse.

"I recognized your tender soul, dear and well-beloved vicar-general, and your still youthful heart, in all that the reverend father general of our order has just told me. You have understood the only wish that lurks in the depths of my heart so far as the things of the world are concerned—to get justice done to my feelings by her who has treated me so badly ! But before leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the general wanted to know that my vocation was sincere ; he was so kind as to tell me his idea, on finding that I was determined to preserve absolute silence on this point. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the friar would have been rejected by this monastery. Grace has certainly done her work ; but, though short, the struggle was not the less keen or the less painful. Is not this enough to show you that I could never return to the world.

"Hence my forgiveness, which you ask for the author of so much woe, is entire and without a thought of vindictiveness. I will pray to God to forgive that young lady as I forgive her, and as I shall beseech Him to give Madame de Rhétoré a life of happiness. Ah ! whether it be death, or the obstinate hand of a young girl madly bent on being loved, or one of the blows ascribed to chance, must we not all obey God ? Sorrow in some souls makes a vast void through which the Divine voice rings. I learned too late the bearings of this life on

that which awaits us ; all in me is worn out ; I could not serve in the ranks of the church militant, and I lay the remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the altar.

"This is the last time I shall ever write. You alone, who loved me, and whom I loved so well, could make me break the law of oblivion I imposed on myself when I entered these headquarters of Saint Bruno, but you are always especially named in the prayers of

"BROTHER ALBERT.

"*November*, 1836."

"Everything is for the best, perhaps," thought the Abbé de Grancey.

When he showed this letter to Rosalie, who with a pious impulse kissed the lines which contained her forgiveness, he said to her—

"Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not be reconciled to your mother and marry the Comte de Soulas?"

"Only if Albert should order it," said she.

"But you see it is impossible to consult him. The general of the order would not allow it."

"If I were to go to see him?"

"No Carthusian sees any visitor. Besides, no woman but the Queen of France may enter a Carthusian monastery," said the abbé. "So you have no longer any excuse for not marrying young Monsieur de Soulas."

"I do not wish to destroy my mother's happiness," retorted Rosalie.

"Satan!" exclaimed the vicar-general.

Towards the end of that winter the worthy Abbé de Grancey died. This good friend no longer stood between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, to soften the impact of those two iron wills.

The event he had foretold took place. In the month of August, 1837, Madame de Watteville was married to Monsieur de Soulas in Paris, whither she went by Rosalie's advice, the

girl making a show of kindness and sweetness to her mother. Madame de Watteville believed in this affection on the part of her daughter, who simply desired to go to Paris to give herself the luxury of a bitter revenge ; she thought of nothing but avenging Savaron by torturing her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville had been declared legally of age ; she was, in fact, not far from one-and-twenty. Her mother, to settle with her finally, had resigned her claims on Les Rouxey, and the daughter had signed a release for all the inheritance of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and settle all her own fortune on him.

"Let us each be perfectly free," she said.

Madame de Soulas, who had been uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this liberality, and made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the funds as conscience money. As the Comtesse de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from her own lands, and was quite incapable of alienating them in order to diminish Rosalie's share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still a fortune to marry, of eighteen hundred thousand francs ; Les Rouxey, with the Baron's additions, and certain improvements, might yield twenty thousand francs a year, besides the value of the house, rents, and preserves. So Rosalie and her mother, who soon adopted the Paris style and fashions, easily obtained introductions to the best society. The golden key—eighteen hundred thousand francs—embroidered on Mademoiselle de Watteville's stomacher, did more for the Comtesse de Soulas than her pretentions *à la* de Rupt, her inappropriate pride, or even her rather distant great connections.

In the month of February, 1838, Rosalie, who was eagerly courted by many young men, achieved the purpose which had brought her to Paris. This was to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see this wonderful woman, and to overwhelm her with perennial remorse. Rosalie gave herself up to the most

bewildering elegance and vanities in order to face the Duchess on an equal footing.

They first met at a ball given annually after 1830 for the benefit of the pensioners on the old Civil List. A young man, prompted by Rosalie, pointed her out to the Duchess, saying—

"There is a very remarkable young person, a strong-minded young lady too! She drove a clever man into a monastery —the Grande Chartreuse—a man of immense capabilities, Albert de Savaron, whose career she wrecked. She is Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous Besançon heiress——"

The Duchess turned pale. Rosalie's eyes met hers with one of those flashes which, between woman and woman, are more fatal than the pistol-shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected that Albert might be innocent, hastily quitted the ball-room, leaving the speaker at his wits' end to guess what terrible blow he had inflicted on the beautiful Duchesse de Rhétoré.

"If you want to hear more about Albert, come to the opera ball on Tuesday with a marigold in your hand."

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the Duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hand all Albert's letters, with that written to Léopold Hannequin by the vicar-general, and the notary's reply, and even that in which she had written her own confession to the Abbé de Grancey.

"I do not choose to be the only sufferer," she said to her rival, "for one has been as ruthless as the other."

After enjoying the dismay stamped on the Duchess' beautiful face, Rosalie went away; she went out no more, and returned to Besançon with her mother.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lived alone on her estate of Les Rouxey, riding, hunting, refusing two or three offers a

year, going to Besançon four or five times in the course of the winter, and busying herself with improving her land, was regarded as a very eccentric personage. She was one of the celebrities of the Eastern provinces.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl, and she has grown younger; but young Monsieur de Soulas has aged a good deal.

"My fortune has cost me dear," said he to young Chavoncourt. "Really to know a bigot it is unfortunately necessary to marry her!"

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves in the most extraordinary manner. "She has vagaries," people say. Every year she goes to gaze at the walls of the Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she dreams of imitating her grand-uncle by forcing the walls of the monastery to find a husband, as Watteville broke through those of his monastery to recover his liberty.

She left Besançon in 1841, intending, it was said, to get married; but the real reason of this expedition is still unknown, for she returned home in a state which forbids her ever appearing in society again. By one of those chances of which the Abbé de Grancey had spoken, she happened to be on the Loire in a steamboat of which the boiler burst. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face is marked with fearful scars, which have bereft her of her beauty; her health, cruelly upset, leaves her few days free from suffering. In short, she now never leaves the Chartreuse of Les Rouxey, where she leads a life wholly devoted to religious practices.

PARIS, *May*, 1842.

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